RESEARCH REPORT

Aiming Higher Together

Strategizing Better Educational Outcomes for Boys and Young Men of Color

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AT THE HARVARD KENNEDY SCHOOL

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Executive Summary

***Aiming Higher Together* concerns what we can do as a society to overcome the systemic *predicament* facing boys and young men of color (BYMOC), young males who are identified or self-identify as blacks, Latinos, or Native Americans, in US schools. Their unique predicament is a complex web of circumstances for which no individual is to blame and that no one person can unravel. Across the nation, it helps produce a familiar pattern: whether Native Americans in Arizona, Latinos in Texas, or blacks in Illinois, BYMOC are underrepresented among youth who excel in school and overrepresented among those with low grades, low test scores, and disciplinary problems. Individual BYMOC with ample resources or great determination can escape or avoid the predicament to various degrees, but none can dismantle it. Dismantling it requires the type of social movement that President Obama's My Brother's Keeper initiative is intended to inspire.**

The paper argues that efforts to dismantle the predicament should begin at birth. Evidence from the nationally representative Early-Childhood Longitudinal Study shows that, on average, BYMOC at each parental education level lag their peers in cognitive skills by age 2. Three years later, skill gaps measured at the beginning of kindergarten predict all of the racial difference in special education placements by fifth grade. Studies cited in the paper found race and gender differences in home-based learning activities in early childhood and indicate promising ways that communities can work with parents and other caregivers to help level the playing field beginning from birth. Policy supports such as universal preschool and paid parental leave can also help parents give their children an even start.

There is evidence that BYMOC desire to succeed academically as much as any other group. However, they tend to start kindergarten as the lowest-achieving group in the school. This position in the achievement hierarchy may contribute to distinctive social forces associated with race and gender identity—forces that operate like crosswinds and make staying on course for school success more challenging than for other groups. Even when they misbehave, BYMOC are often responding to peer pressures they would prefer to resist but feel compelled to comply with. The paper uses student survey results from thousands of classrooms, and BYMOC self-reported worse behavior than their classmates did. However, the reason is not necessarily because they enjoy misbehavior. Instead, BYMOC were more likely than others to agree with the statement "*I do things I don't want to do because of pressure from*

other students." Hence, misbehavior is often an act of compliance and an expression of social vulnerability.

Additional signs of vulnerability are that BYMOC reported more frequently hiding effort—pretending not to try—and sometimes even holding back from doing their best for fear of what other students might say or think (see the section "Peer Pressures, Bad Behaviors, and Hidden Ambition"). The distinct social pressures that compel BYMOC to misbehave, the feelings of insecurity that induce compliance with such pressures, and the negative stereotypes that misbehaviors reinforce are all aspects of the predicament. BYMOC need help learning to resist negative peer influences and need strategies for coping effectively with adults who respond to them based on negative stereotypes.

The paper cites evidence that some teachers are inclined to approach BYMOC more aggressively because of group reputations for defiant behavior, especially among black males. Anticipated hostility on both sides of teacher-student encounters can produce spiraling escalation of misbehavior and excessive discipline. Interactions between students and teachers who do not know one another can be especially problematic. On student surveys, BYMOC rated their classroom teachers the same, on average, as their white male classmates, but there are clear racial tensions in the hallways. Compared to white males with the same grade point averages, adolescent males of color at every achievement level reported giving and receiving less respect when interacting in the hallways with teachers who may not know them. The paper cites evidence that such conditions are not inevitable and that teachers can learn constructive ways to avoid escalation in and out of the classroom. In addition, school leaders can cultivate cultures of mutual respect among students and between students and teachers.

Another aspect of the predicament is limited access to orderly classrooms. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Project on Measures of Effective Teaching found that an orderly, on-task classroom is among the strongest predictors of annual learning gains. The paper suggests that differential access to orderly classrooms is among the greatest disparities in educational opportunity. As early as upper elementary school, there is a strong correlation between the percentage of students of color in a class and agreement on student surveys that "*Students behave so badly in our class that it slows down our learning*." The paper argues that teachers in classrooms predominantly composed of students of color need support to develop strong classroom management skills—not to be intimidating, but to be firm, caring, and engaging in ways proven to help keep students on task. This includes lessons that are interesting, clear, and appropriately challenging for the students in the class.

BYMOC are overrepresented in schools where discipline for misbehavior often leads to missed opportunities for learning. This too is part of the predicament. The paper presents evidence from one

state that shows black-white disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions among students referred to the office for disciplinary reasons is more of a between-school than within-school phenomenon. The study that is the source for this finding is the first of its kind to make the between- versus within-school distinction so clearly. The study found that when students were sent to the office, administrators tended to give blacks and whites who committed the same infraction the same discipline. However, there were between-school disparities. Out-of-school suspensions were most common in schools with higher percentages of black students or lower scores on standardized tests of reading and math. It appears that out-of-school suspensions are most common under conditions where administrators are likely to be overwhelmed and in greater need of additional resources and supports for behavior management. The paper cites some promising examples of alternatives to suspensions.

The quality of teaching matters as well. The paper shows that no matter what the racial composition of the classroom, BYMOC self-reported better behavior in classes that rate higher on seven components of effective teaching. These include the same components of teaching that, in other research, predict higher achievement gains and development of agency-related factors such as conscientiousness, growth mindset, future orientation, and socioemotional skills. However, evidence in the paper suggests that, on average, BYMOC have less access to effective teaching than whites do. The paper suggests that professional development helping teachers improve on basic components of effective teaching should be part of the formula for helping BYMOC escape their predicament. There are also examples where effective leadership has helped schools improve teaching and raise achievement for all groups while narrowing gaps. Sustaining such conditions requires ongoing leadership and effective systems and procedures.

Our challenge, the paper argues, is to aim higher together by fostering conditions in homes, schools, peer groups, and communities that enable instead of stifle BYMOC achievement. In some places, this will require more financial resources. Nationwide, it will require taking initiative to understand the predicament that these young men face and to nurture them more effectively from birth. This means effectively preparing infants, toddlers, and preschoolers for the first day of school; giving teachers the skills and supports they need to manage diverse classrooms, well prepared to provide high-quality instruction to students at every skill level; teaching BYMOC to resist negative peer pressures and not impose pressures on others; instituting classroom, school, and district guidelines for empathetic and developmentally supportive discipline; and helping BYMOC develop goals that are both inspiring and feasible. These elements make up the birth-to-adulthood web of intentional supports that BYMOC need to help them avoid the predicament.

Introduction

Within every age group and every generation, there have always been males of color who achieve excellence. As adults, men of color have been mayors, governors, CEOs of major corporations, outstanding scientists, and even President of the United States. Still, boys and young men of color (BYMOC) remain underrepresented among youth who excel academically and overrepresented among those who do not.

The paper addresses ways of understanding and unravelling what it calls *the predicament*: a tangled web of home, school, peer-group, and societal factors that place BYMOC *from every socioeconomic level* at risk for underperformance in school and life. As individuals, BYMOC cannot easily avoid or escape the predicament. They need help. This includes altering home, school, peer-group, and societal routines that serve BYMOC less effectively than their peers. It also includes making BYMOC a priority at least on a par with any other group. The paper draws upon a large body of research and presents new findings.

While BYMOC differ in how much it affects them, the predicament is systemic in both structural and cultural ways. It cannot be fundamentally altered by any individual; a movement is required. By far the most prominent effort to frame, inform, inspire, and support a movement to uplift BYMOC is President Obama's My Brother's Keeper (MBK) initiative. MBK is a movement rather than just an initiative, including but also transcending policy. Certainly, professional service providers can implement policies and programs in service to MBK goals. However, no leader or government can bring about the changes to normal, everyday interaction needed for a broad-based transformation in what our children, especially males of color, routinely experience. MBK's six main goals are that

- all children enter school cognitively, physically, socially, and emotionally ready;
- all children read at grade level by third grade;
- all youth graduate from high school;
- all youth complete postsecondary education or training;
- all youth out of school are employed; and
- all youth remain safe from violent crime and receive second chances.

This paper primarily addresses the first three MBK goals.

BYMOC is a broad category, within which groups and even individuals have tremendously varied experiences. Recognizing this, the paper considers both commonalities and differences among BYMOC. However, it mainly contrasts BYMOC with females and white males. Also, in most cases, the paper considers Asians as a separate group. I refer to boys and young men *of color* instead of *nonwhites* in order to prioritize what they are (people of color) rather than what they are not (whites). By young men, I mean older adolescents, not adults. The term *minority* is avoided because it is the opposite of *majority*, and already there is no racial majority among babies born in the US.[1] Black males receive the most attention in this paper partly because they have been the focus of more research and more data are available and partly because their situations are often the most problematic (excepting Native Americans, for whom there is often a lack of data).

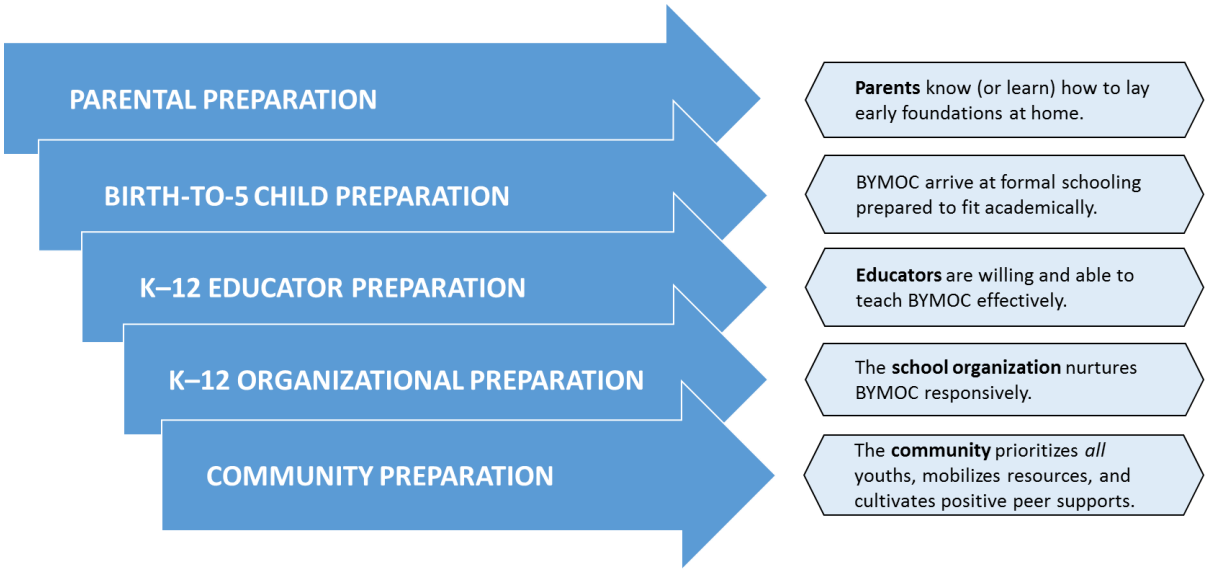
Finally, it may be relevant to readers that the author is a black father of male children whose lives intersect in numerous ways with the issues that the paper addresses. I am also the creator of the Tripod® surveys upon which the paper relies extensively and the cofounder of Tripod Education Partners, Inc., which works with districts across the nation to provide survey-based feedback from elementary and secondary school students to their classroom teachers.

Achieving Person-Environment Fit

The predicament facing BYMOC involves a high risk for *failures of person-environment fit*. In organization theory, person-environment fit pertains to the relationship of an employee to the job setting (Edwards, Caplan, and Harrison 1998; Caplan 1987). The paper examines the concept in the context of the student and the school. Quality of person-environment fit depends on how well the student is prepared to assume roles that teachers, counselors, and administrators expect of him *and how willing and able those adults are to adapt in ways necessary to effectively teach and nurture the student*. There are five major components, each involving a type of preparation, to a strategy for achieving and sustaining person-environment fit for BYMOC and others in elementary and secondary schools (see figure 1).

FIGURE 1

Five Strategic Components to Achieve Person-Environment Fit and School Success



1. **Parental Preparation: Parents Know (or Learn) How to Lay Early Foundations.** Parents and caregivers need to understand the importance of very early childhood learning experiences for BYMOC beginning at birth. Parental engagement throughout the school years is also important but not a focus of the paper. Parents need supports to help them understand how they can help their children. Under conditions of hardship and stress, parents may also need support to follow through *and actually do* the things they know (or learn) are important.
2. **Birth-to-5 (and Continuing) Preparation: BYMOC Arrive at Kindergarten Prepared to Fit Academically.** Many boys of color enter kindergarten unprepared and experience a poor person-environment fit on their very first encounter with formal schooling. Enhanced parental preparation as well as access to quality child care and preschool settings can help. For all children, ensuring availability of affordable slots in high-quality preschool settings should be a policy priority. In addition, high-quality nurturance for infants is more feasible with paid parental leave policies.[2]
3. **K–12 Educator Preparation: Educators Willing and Able to Teach BMYOC Effectively**. Educators in K–12 schools and classrooms need professional supports to master the art of teaching in general and for supporting BYMOC in particular. The paper shows that BYMOC tend to be more concentrated than white males in classrooms that are difficult to manage both academically (because more students struggle) and behaviorally (because more students misbehave). Teachers in high-poverty settings especially need more skills for engaging students, helping struggling learners, and managing behavior. Teachers of BYMOC need

strategies that help them override their impulses to respond based on negative stereotypes and avoid emotional escalation when, for example, either the student or the teacher feels misunderstood or disrespected. The paper presents evidence that educators can improve along multiple dimensions, including through anti-escalation programming.

4. **K–12 Organizational Preparation: the School Organization Nurtures BYMOC Empathetically.** School leaders should monitor formal and informal rules and procedures and modify any that fit poorly with developmental goals. The paper presents evidence that the pattern of higher out-of-school suspension rates for BYMOC referred to the administrator's office for disciplinary reasons may operate more between schools than within schools. Youth of any background are more likely to receive an out-of-school suspension in schools where a higher percentage of students are BYMOC. Administrators need more developmentally appropriate ways of managing discipline. The paper identifies examples of progress.
5. **Community Preparation: The Community Prioritizes ALL Youths and Cultivates Positive Peer Supports**. School and community leaders should ensure that adults and peers treat the developmental needs of BYMOC as a priority at least on a par with that of any other group. This includes ensuring that schools have adequate financial resources and professional cultures of continuous school improvement. It also includes helping BYMOC create and sustain the positive peer supports that they really want. Survey evidence indicates that BYMOC in secondary schools are more likely than other groups to succumb to negative peer pressures and do things that they would prefer not to. This reflects how BYMOC are socially positioned structurally, and social repositioning is not something that BYMOC can do on their own. Leadership and school-community reforms are required.

Skill Gaps to Close at All Parental Education Levels

There is plenty of evidence that narrowing gaps between BYMOC and white males of skills measured by standardized tests would help equalize other life outcomes (Fryer 2011). This evidence is discussed below. However, it seems important to first acknowledge that standardized test scores are controversial. People of color have historically been excluded from opportunities or labeled as genetically inferior based on standardized test scores (Kevles 2004). While gaps remain, progress has gradually robbed genetic arguments of their steam. Between 1970 and 2000, the black-white IQ gap shrank by 25 percent (Dickens and Flynn 2001, 2006), and between 1971 and 1988, the reading score gap between black and white 17-year-olds shrank by 62 percent.[3] Recent data show that math scores

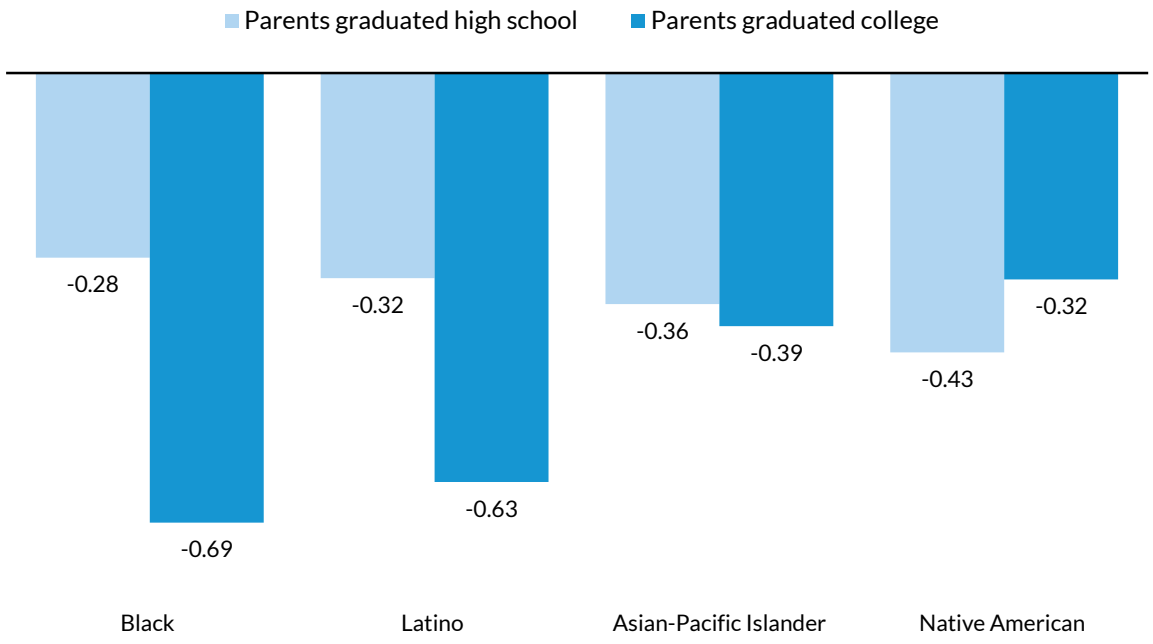
for 9-year-old black and Latino children now equal or exceed those of whites from 35 years ago.[4] Differences are not written in stone, and progress is possible.

At every age, many BYMOC do better than many whites, and vice versa. The disparities that are the focus in this paper concern *group averages* and exist at all parental education levels. Nationally representative data show that even among children with highly educated parents, children of color score lower than whites on cognitive skills assessments. Figure 2 shows cognitive gaps for 2-year-old males while figures 3 and 4 show disparities for 12th grade males in math and reading. All three figures show the gaps between white children and black, Latino, Asian-Pacific Islander, and Native American children. The light-blue bars represent gaps between children of parents with no postsecondary education and the darker blue bars represent gaps between children whose parents are four-year college graduates. In 8 of the 12 instances, gaps are greater among children of college graduates. Hence, we need to improve outcomes for BYMOC from homes of all parental education levels.

FIGURE 2

Cognitive Skill Gaps at 24 Months for Male Toddlers by Race/Ethnicity and Parental Education Level

Compared with whites, 2003–04, population SD units

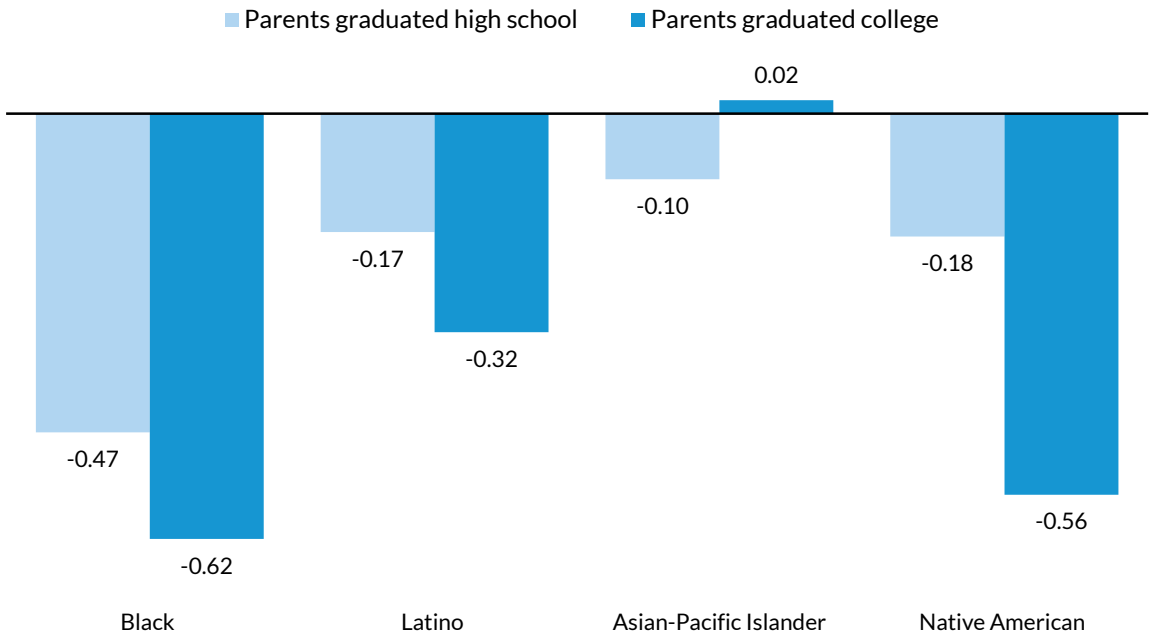


Source: Constructed by the author from data provided by William Monson with Julia Gelatt of the Urban Institute using the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort, data from 2003–04.
Note: Parental education is the highest educational attainment of any parent in the child's household.

FIGURE 3

NAEP Reading Score Gaps for 12th Grade Males by Race/Ethnicity and Parental Education Level

Compared with whites, 2013, population SD units



Source: Calculations by the author using data downloaded from the National Assessment of Educational Progress Data Explorer, https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx.

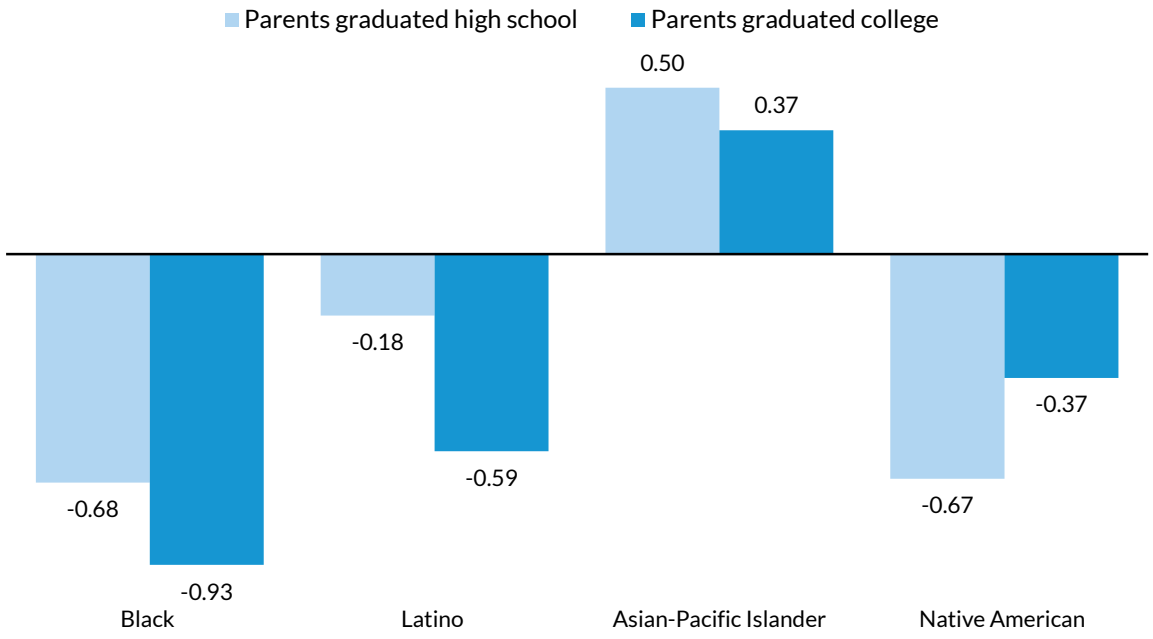
Notes: The population standard deviation for males and females combined was used for converting scaled scores to standard deviation units. Based on information available at https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/tdw/analysis/trans.aspx, the standard deviation was set to 50 for math scores and 35 for reading scores. For Native Americans, no gender breakdown was available for males whose parents were high-school graduates, so the score for males and females combined was substituted for this one group.

The late-20th-century relationship between reading, math, and reasoning skills and racial income inequality became clear around 1990. In 1980, the National Longitudinal Survey of Youth used the Armed Forces Qualifications Test to measure the skills of a nationally representative sample of 12,000 15- to 22-year-olds. Follow-up interviews were conducted annually, and by 1990, the original sample participants were between 25 and 32 years of age. Many were in the labor force. Controlled for parental education level and other background variables, the black-white and Latino-white gaps in 1980 test scores largely predicted the hourly earnings gaps between black, Latino, and white males in 1990 (R. Ferguson 2007; Fryer 2011; Neal and Johnson 1996).

FIGURE 4

NAEP Math Score Gaps for 12th Grade Males by Race/Ethnicity and Parental Education Level

Compared with whites, 2013, population SD units



Source: Calculations by the author using data downloaded from the National Assessment of Educational Progress Data Explorer, https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx.

Notes: The population standard deviation for males and females combined was used for converting scaled scores to standard deviation units. Based on information available at https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/tdw/analysis/trans.aspx, the standard deviation was set to 50 for math scores and 35 for reading scores. For Native Americans, no gender breakdown was available for males whose parents were high-school graduates, so the score for males and females combined was substituted for this one group.

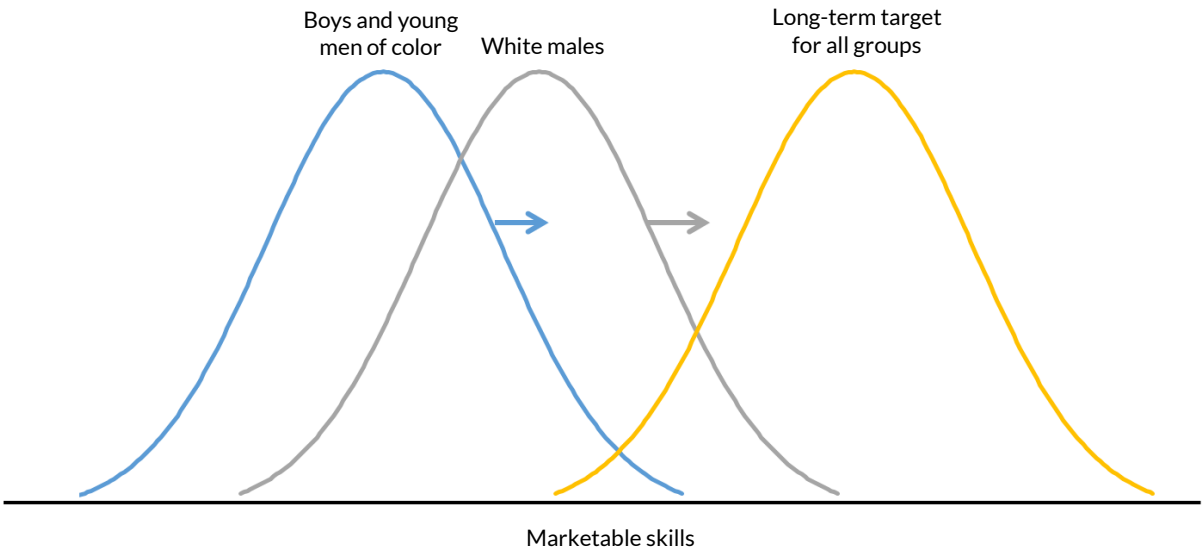
Recently, Roland Fryer (2011) analyzed data for the same sample, now in middle age.[5] He found that people with higher Qualifications Test scores as 15- to 22-year-olds were less likely to be unemployed or incarcerated in their forties and more likely to earn higher wages and be in good health. Fryer adds to the evidence that academic skills are a major remaining contributor to earnings and quality-of-life disparities between blacks, whites, and Latinos. He uses a variety of sources and multiple approaches to document continuing achievement gaps. While it is true that scores are higher and racial gaps smaller than several decades ago, showing that progress is possible, large gaps remain and have consequences.

The long-term goal regarding skill disparities should be *excellence with group-proportional equality*. Figure 5 shows two hypothetical overlapping bell-shaped skill distributions, one for BYMOC and the other for white males. Marketable skills are measured along the horizontal axis. The goal is not simply

for BYMOC to match white males, but for both groups to reach a higher standard expressed by the third curve, excellence with group-proportional equality. In this ideal condition, both groups have achieved excellence and group membership is no longer a meaningful signal of marketable skill.

FIGURE 5

Excellence with Group-Proportional Equality



About the Paper

The paper has five major sections. The first section, "**Birth-to-5 Preparation**," concerns cognitive development from birth through age 5 and addresses patterns in what children experience developmentally. It relates to the first two components of the person-environment fit strategy: *parental preparation* and *birth-to-5 child preparation*.

The second section, "**Quality and Fit in K–12 Classrooms**," relates to the *K–12 educator preparation* component of the person-environment fit strategy. Classroom-level student surveys play a central role in measuring student perceptions of the quality of teaching they experience. The section discusses two types of comparisons: One concerns how BYMOC and white males perceive teaching and learning in the same classroom. The other concerns how students in different classrooms—especially classes with very different racial compositions—perceive those classrooms.

The third section, "**Disproportionality and Bias**," considers the multiple forms that bias can take. It presents evidence on racial, ethnic, and gender disproportionality in course placements, behaviors, and

discipline. This relates most directly to the *K–12 organizational preparation* component of the person-environment fit strategy.

The fourth section, "**The Person-Environment Fit Predicament**," pulls together themes from the paper into a schematic where cultural mismatches, disparate resource levels, and early skill gaps are the major contributors to the predicament.

"How Schools Improve for Males of Color," the final section, concerns improving schools as organizations to nurture BYMOC toward better academic and developmental outcomes.

The paper is not suggesting that every family or community of a particular racial, ethnic, or socioeconomic group, or all parents whose child is of a particular gender, fit a particular pattern. It addresses group-level patterns to which the available evidence calls our attention. Even among BYMOC, experiences differ systematically—especially in relationship to socioeconomic status—and family-background patterns have been heavily influenced by historical forces.[6] However, historical antecedents such as slavery and Jim Crow are beyond the scope of this paper.[7] Instead, the emphasis is on what BYMOC experience in the contemporary US, beginning at birth, and how those experiences need to improve through family, school, community, and political reforms.

The paper treats systematic racial and ethnic differences in development as consequences of lived experiences.[8] It is acknowledged that differences between boys and girls may have genetic components. It has been suggested that girls perform better in reading because of certain identifiable biologic phenomena, but scientists disagree about how strongly.[9] The paper cites evidence that girls receive more literacy support as toddlers than boys and that at least some gender differences are environmental. Therefore, this paper is focused on racial, ethnic, and gendered patterns in children's lived experiences that, based on research, seem to contribute to developmental disparities. It addresses sensitive topics, challenges some standard assumptions, and identifies practical ways to help more BYMOC succeed in school and life.

Birth-to-5 Preparation

From birth, children's interactions with the people around them shape their readiness for the classroom. The nature of these interactions determines how well they develop in controlling their emotions and behaviors; performing age-appropriate literacy, reasoning, and numeric tasks; paying attention to instructions; following directions; communicating verbally; and performing basic perceptual, fine-motor, and gross-motor tasks. The sum of these skills constitutes school readiness.[10]

Beginning from Birth

Science teaches us that human social and cognitive development depend upon everyday lived experiences. Nature and nurture interact to affect how genes express themselves. The loving, talking, counting, playing, and literacy activities that children experience during the first three years of life influence how their brains take shape and help determine strengths and weaknesses that manifest later in life.

The brain begins developing a few weeks after conception. It grows to about 80 percent of adult size during the first three years of life, a period of tremendous *neural plasticity*. There are two types of plasticity: *developmental* plasticity and *adult* plasticity. Developmental plasticity for social skills and self-control extends into early adulthood. However, for cognitive skills (i.e., academic skills) it ends earlier. By the time a child reaches adolescence, academic learning involves adult plasticity. Learning continues, but not so easily as when children were younger and their brains soaked up knowledge like sponges (Nelson and Sheridan 2011).

BYMOC and other children have the best chance in life when provided with lots of appropriate stimulation during the first few years when developmental plasticity for academic skills is greatest and cognitive development most automatic. In a sense, the brain during this time is like a savings account with an extraordinarily high long-term rate of return. The experiences and supports that parents and caregivers supply are the deposits.

Cognitive Disparities at Age 2

Such differences between BYMOC and whites are hardly evident at all around the age of one, but are clearly apparent by age 2 (Fryer and Levitt 2013; Halle et al. 2009). The best data on the topic come from the Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Birth Cohort (ECLS-B). Computations using the ECLS-B are the basis for figure 2, presented earlier, showing racial and ethnic differences between 2-year-old males.[11]

That cognitive gaps can already be stark at 24 months has been well documented. In a recent, widely cited study focused on socioeconomic status (SES) gaps, the authors summarized their findings as follows: "The most important findings were that significant disparities in vocabulary and language processing efficiency were already evident at 18 months between infants from higher- and lower-SES families, and by 24 months there was a 6-month gap between SES groups in processing skills critical to language development" (Fernald, Marchman, and Weisleder 2013, 234).

Meredith Phillips (2011, 221), using data from the nationally representative Panel Study of Income Dynamics, found that between birth and age 2, "black children spend 140 fewer hours in literacy activities than white children, *even when children from similar family backgrounds are compared*" (emphasis added). Phillips found that racial gaps remain in both reading time and parent-child conversations, even after accounting for the social class measures in her data. Such findings are important because reading and parent-child conversations are things that families and communities can do something about.

Let me assert explicitly that this information should not be used to judge parents. Parenting is as historically grounded as any other aspect of human endeavor, in which approaches are handed down across generations and new parents learn caregiving from older family members. History has produced distinctive styles of parenting, discussed by authors such as Brooks-Gunn and Markman (2005), Lareau (2011), Baumrind (1966, 1996), and Sorkhabi and Mandara (2012). Styles vary systematically by socioeconomic background, race, and ethnicity, reflecting customs as well as family resources. We are now at a particular point in history and each of us is part of the process through which future generations can benefit from what we have learned about the parenting and caregiving strategies that give children the best chance to succeed in school and life.

Gender Differences in Early Nurturance

A *meta-analysis* on any given topic combines many individual studies to reach an overall conclusion about what all of them together teach us. Lytton and Romney (1991) conducted a large meta-analysis of studies on whether parents treat girls and boys differently. While they did not find clear evidence of gender differentiation in amounts of parent-child interaction, achievement encouragement, warmth, strictness, or use of reasoning, they did find evidence that parents encourage sex-typed play activities. Fagot (1978) also found that parents of toddlers responded more positively to girls asking for help than boys. Girls received more positive responses and asked for help three times more often than boys did. The author questioned whether parents responded more positively because they perceived girls as more in need of help, but ruled out that possibility. Rather, adults tended to perceive girls as more competent than boys. While both examined gender differences, neither Lytton and Romney nor Fagot explicitly addressed race, ethnicity, or socioeconomic status.

A recent study examines the activities that low-income African American, Latino, and white fathers engage in with their children at ages 2, 3, and 4 (Leavell et al. 2012). The study found that all three groups of fathers engaged sons in physical play more often than daughters and daughters in literacy activities more often than sons. Literacy activities were most common among fathers of white girls and least common among fathers of Latino boys. The authors expected that gendered activities would increase as children got closer to age 4. To their surprise, they found that gendered differences in parenting were in place by the age of 2.

Ultimately, there is no consensus on just how strongly gender differences in lived experiences, as opposed to biology, shape cognitive development. Still, we know that gender matters sociologically. Albert Bandura and Kay Bussey (1999, 676) offer a *social-cognitive theory of gender development*. They write, "In this theoretical perspective, gender conceptions and roles are the product of a broad network of social influences operating interdependently in a variety of social subsystems." Because gender is so central in life, children can distinguish between the sexes of people around them in the first year of life. They begin behaving in gendered ways by age 1. As Bandura and Bussey (1996) point out, toddlers detect subtle differences in the positive or negative reinforcements they receive, depending upon whether they model their behaviors after the females or the males in their own households. Parents need to be aware of the subtle ways that gender biases may undermine their sons' cognitive development and make sure their sons receive early support for cognitive growth.

Programming for Infants and Toddlers

There is ample evidence that developmental outcomes for infants and toddlers can be improved (Astone et al. 2015). Home visiting and early education programs have proven effective in several experimental studies with randomized treatment and control groups, but only if they are of high quality. The things that make programs effective for infants and toddlers also foster healthy development at home. Indeed, home visiting programs focus directly on affecting how caregivers interact with their children and take care of themselves *in the home*.

While home visiting programs reach children by helping parents develop better routines and skills, child care programs work directly with children (and sometimes parents). Programs with well-trained and effectively supervised staff and clear goals and procedures tend to more consistently achieve positive results, but these are often very small programs serving limited numbers of children. The regular federal Head Start program begins at age 3, but there is also an Early Head Start program designed for infants and toddlers. An evaluation of Early Head Start found small but positive initial effects on cognitive test scores as well as some measures of behavior (Love et al. 2005).

The most famous child care program for infants and toddlers based on high-quality evaluations and showing long-term results is the Carolina Abecedarian Project. It is often mentioned in the same breath as the famous Perry Preschool Project,[12] but Perry served 3- and 4-year-olds, not infants and toddlers. The Abecedarian project began serving children from high-poverty backgrounds at 3 to 6 months of age and stayed with them and their families through the early elementary years. From entry as infants through age 5, children attended a full-time, high-quality educational intervention in a child care setting. Each child had an individualized plan of educational activities ("games") focused on social, emotional, and cognitive development, with special attention to language development. Participants in the Carolina Abecedarian project have continued to show positive effects compared to the control group well into their thirties and forties,[13] adding to the evidence that high-quality early education programs can produce long-lasting results.

Such programs are typically small, and access is often limited to the neediest families. As indicated above, racial and socioeconomic disparities also exist between families that are not highly disadvantaged. Recall from figure 2 that even among children with college-educated parents, racial gaps between group averages are evident by 24 months. Meredith Phillips (2011) indicates that such differences may be due to early experiences at home. Therefore, it may be possible to narrow gaps that emerge in early childhood through local civic strategies that use organizing and social-marketing methods to share information with all types of families.

The potential effects of organizing and social-marketing campaigns on caregiving for infants and toddlers have yet to be proven, but these efforts may be the only hope to achieve as broad an effect as is needed. Civic communities around the nation are beginning to respond, and there are a number of city-level initiatives focused, for example, on talking to infants, toddlers, and preschoolers. Many are listed on the website of Too Small to Fail, an initiative launched by Next Generation and the Clinton Foundation. Too Small to Fail "aims to help parents and businesses take meaningful actions to improve the health and well-being of children from birth through age 5 so that more of America's children are prepared to succeed in the 21st century."[14] Too Small to Fail has helped spearhead work in Tulsa, Oklahoma, and Oakland, California. In addition, the website identifies word-gap campaigns in California, Colorado, Connecticut, the District of Columbia, Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Massachusetts, Missouri, New York, Tennessee, Washington, and Wisconsin.[15] Other initiatives are listed in Dana Suskind's (2015) book, *Thirty Million Words*.

A coalition in Boston, Massachusetts, is leading an effort to saturate the city with a set of strategies called the Boston Basics for children age 3 and under. Working through a deep network of organizations that touch virtually everyone in the city, including health centers, churches, schools, personal care establishments, recreation centers, and large employers, the Boston Basics Campaign seeks to change extended-family social norms around early childhood caregiving. The Basics are "five fun, simple, and powerful ways that every family can give every child a great start in life."[16] They are being disseminated by a coalition of organizations using a variety of methods for engaging not only caregivers but also the family, friends, service providers, and associates who support and influence them.[17]

Programming for Preschoolers

Skill gaps among preschool children build upon the patterns introduced above for infants and toddlers. Recently, a panel of 10 experts led by Hiro Yoshikawa (2013) conducted an authoritative review of research-based knowledge on the value of preschool education. As of 2013, 42 percent of 4-year-olds attended either public prekindergarten programs (28 percent), Head Start (11 percent), or special education preschool programs (3 percent) (Barnett et al. 2015, 7). The best programs pass a social cost-benefit test. Yoshikawa and his colleagues cite a review of studies covering 84 programs for which children gain, on average, about a third of a year of additional learning across language, reading, and math skills. Furthermore, "At-scale preschool systems in Tulsa and Boston have produced larger gains of between a half and a full year of additional learning in reading and math. Benefits to children's socio-emotional development and health have been documented in programs that focus intensively on these areas" (Barnett et al. 2015, 1). Effects are more mixed in programs that do not focus explicitly on specific outcomes.

So far, this paper has emphasized academic skill measures, important predictors of adult outcomes such as racial income disparities.[18] But other developmental outcomes matter too. In fact, the strongest effects of the Perry Preschool experiment have been on "externalizing behaviors." Externalizing behaviors are negative behaviors directed at the external environment and include such things as fighting, refusing to follow rules, cursing, and stealing.

A study of data from the Perry Preschool project by Heckman, Pinto, and Savelyev (2013) concluded that "[t]he effect of the intervention on life outcomes operates primarily through the program's enhancement of externalizing behavior." They found that 20 to 60 percent of the effect of Perry Preschool on adult crime for males and about 40 to 60 percent for females was through the effect on externalizing behaviors. Research by Segal (2013) indicates that, over time, externalizing behaviors settle into personality traits, and behavioral tendencies become very stable as soon as the early-to-middle teen years. A person's behavior still varies in response to externally imposed costs and benefits, but internal self-management skills and tendencies are mostly in place by the eighth grade (Segal 2008). Consequently, socializing forces during the early childhood and elementary years really matter.

There is evidence from Massachusetts and North Carolina that high-quality preschool experiences can increase school readiness and reduce the likelihood of special education placements through third grade (Muschkin, Ladd, and Dodge 2015; Duncan and Murnane 2014). A central remaining challenge in the field of preschool programming is ensuring consistently high quality. Yoshikawa et al. (2013) report that large-scale studies find only a minority of preschool programs are able to consistently provide

services of sufficient quality to improve school readiness and support for instructional improvement in these programs is regrettably low.

Chronic absenteeism is also a problem. A recent study from Ehrlich et al. (2013) for the Chicago Consortium for School Research reports that "[c]hildren with better preschool attendance have higher kindergarten readiness scores; this is especially true for students entering with low skills. Unfortunately, many preschool-aged children are chronically absent." Interventions are sorely needed to help parents of preschool children understand the importance of daily attendance and support them in overcoming barriers to attendance, and reforms are needed to ensure more consistently high-quality preschool programming.

What Gaps in Kindergarten Readiness Predict

Researchers Amy Claessens, Greg Duncan, and Mimi Engel (2009) used the nationally representative Early Childhood Longitudinal Study, Kindergarten Cohort, (ECLS-K) to study how kindergarten skills predict performance on fifth-grade reading and math tests (Duncan and Magnuson 2011). They controlled for a number of socioeconomic background factors and focused only on within-classroom variation. Across a large number of fifth-grade classrooms, they designed the study to show why some students have higher scores in reading and math compared to other students *in the same classroom*. The kindergarten metrics that they used to predict fifth-grade reading and math fell into two categories. The first, "achievement skills," included kindergarten reading scores, math scores, and attention skills (the ECLS-K Approaches to Learning [ATL] index, where the teacher rates how focused and on-task the child tends to be). The second category, "socioemotional skills," comprised teacher ratings of child misbehavior (externalizing), mood (internalizing), and social skills.

To their surprise, the authors found that kindergarten socioemotional skills *did not* predict fifth-grade reading and math scores. The most likely explanation is that most children grow out of the behavioral and emotional orientations that cause low socioemotional scores in kindergarten (Duncan and Magnuson 2011). The small number who do not outgrow such tendencies face greater risk of involvement in crime as adolescents (Duncan and Magnuson 2011, 64). Generally, however, a kindergartener's misbehavior or sullen attitude is not a precursor to poor academic performance or even behavioral problems in later grades.

Instead, Claessens, Duncan, and Engel found that all three components of the achievement skills category—reading scores, math scores, and attention skills—predicted fifth-grade reading and math

scores. They concluded, "The most powerful pre-school avenue for boosting fifth-grade achievement appears to be improving the basic academic [including attention] skills of low-achieving children prior to kindergarten entry" (Claessens, Duncan, and Engel 2009, 415).

In explaining the results from this study, Duncan and Magnuson (2011, 50) write, "Children's skills at school entry facilitate the acquisition of more sophisticated skills later. But they also shape children's environments, particularly interactions with teachers and classmates, school experiences such as placement into ability groups, and interactions with family members. These environments can in turn affect children's learning and skill development throughout the school years." Hence, they report a clear connection between early childhood learning and person-environment fit in school.

A recent study by Christopher Cornwell, David Mustard, and Jessica Van Parys (2013) uses the same ECLS-K data to provide a vivid example of how attention skills in particular may help shape children's classroom environments. The study is especially germane because of its focus on gender gaps.

The authors examined whether grading in elementary school classrooms might be biased against boys. In the first part of their analysis, they estimated within-race/ethnicity gender gaps for both grades and test scores for blacks, Latinos, and whites. They found that boys in each group tended to score as well as or better than girls on standardized math and science tests. Nonetheless, teachers consistently rated the math and science performance of boys lower—compared to girls—than their test scores seemed to warrant. Similarly, although boys did not perform as well as girls on standardized reading tests, teachers rated boys even *lower* than predicted by their scores.

When the authors controlled for the same ATL metric that Claessens, Duncan, and Engel used to measure attention, the apparent bias in teacher grading entirely disappeared. Teachers rated boys of all groups about 15 percent lower than girls on the ATL. The authors write, "We document that girls are substantially more amenable to the learning process than boys, and that this noncognitive skill is a significant factor in teacher assessments, even after controlling for test outcomes" (Cornwell, Mustard, and Van Parys 2013, 239).

Cornwell, Mustard, and Van Parys suggest that boys being less attentive than girls might dampen teacher support and thereby lessen their learning opportunities. Amplifying the issue, Duncan and Magnusson (2011, 56) present evidence from the ECLS-K that teacher ratings of both attention and misbehavior are worse for boys than for girls in both kindergarten and fifth grade. Indeed, teacher ratings of fifth-grade behavior were worse for boys than for girls, worse for children from lower socioeconomic backgrounds, and worse for lower achievers than for higher achievers. Note that BYMOC are overrepresented in each of these categories. Also recall that kindergarten misbehavior

does not predict fifth-grade misbehavior. Instead, group differences in misbehavior develop after the start of kindergarten and involve issues of person-environment fit during the school years.

In summary, the evidence in this section shows that gaps in preparation for reading, math, and attentiveness that accumulate from birth through age 5 affect person-environment fit and achievement at least through the fifth year of elementary school. Efforts to avoid negative disproportionality in elementary school achievement should begin long before kindergarten. Additional impacts of kindergarten readiness on special education placements are addressed in a later section of the paper.

Quality and Fit in K–12 Classrooms

In early childhood, *child preparation* means that parents and other caregivers provide learning and skill-building experiences to enable a strong *person-environment fit* for the child when they finally start school. Parents remain important during the school years, but educators assume a major role in helping prepare the child for success in later grades. How effectively they are able to perform that role determines how prepared the child is to experience person-environment fit moving forward. This section and those that follow ask several questions:

- **Effects on Student Engagement:** In what ways might educator and organizational preparation affect what BYMOC experience in school and how effectively they engage in their studies?
- **BYMOC Disparities:** Regarding educator preparation, do BYMOC experience lower quality instruction than white and Asian males? Within classrooms? Between classrooms? Does the instructional quality that BYMOC experience correlate with their behavior or academic performance?
- **School Climate:** Regarding organizational preparation, how well do schools foster climates where adults and students alike support BYMOC as achievers? Do differences in peer norms and social expectations for BYMOC help account for lower average levels of achievement and attainment compared to other groups? Can such norms be influenced?
- **Attitudes/Feelings of BYMOC:** How effectively do educators help BYMOC feel welcome in school, respected and inspired to do their best work, and optimistic about the future? In what ways do feelings of insecurity affect the ways BYMOC and their teachers interact with one another and pursue goals for teaching and learning? What can be done to help?

In the following sections, I present evidence to answer these questions and suggest some promising ways to respond through policy and targeted programming.

Measuring Teaching Quality

How can we know whether BYMOC, on average, experience lower-quality instruction than white and Asian males? Can looking at test-based measures provide an answer? Probably not. However, because

test score approaches to measuring teacher quality are so common, it makes sense to briefly explain the issue before taking an alternative approach.

A common measure of teaching quality is the "value-added measure" (VAM) score. A VAM score for a teacher's classroom measures the improvement in test scores that students achieve over and above (or perhaps below) what a statistical analyst predicts those students *would have* achieved in an *average* teacher's classroom. VAM scores are estimated using current test scores adjusted for previous test scores and for student background characteristics that tend to correlate with the unadjusted scores. If classrooms, on average, see smaller test score gains when they have larger percentages of BYMOC, the VAM score for each classroom is adjusted to remove the difference in gains predictable based on the percentage of BYMOC. In this way, the effect of having more BYMOC (or more students with a father in the home or with highly educated parents, etc.) is removed from the VAM estimate. Hence, VAM scores cannot tell us whether BYMOC (or other students with particular background characteristics) are exposed to lower-quality instruction. VAM is most appropriate when the primary goal is to err on the side of fairness to teachers. If the goal is to measure differential access to quality instruction for particular subgroups—such as BYMOC—then VAM is not a useful approach. At the same time, using unadjusted growth scores does not solve the problem of attribution because it does not isolate the role of the classroom from many other factors affecting achievement growth.

An alternative way to assess instructional quality in a classroom is to ask the students.[19] The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Measures of Effective Teaching project studied how student survey responses in upper elementary and middle school classrooms related to test score gains and observation scores from trained observers. Each classroom in the study had multiple measures. Researchers found that survey responses, value-added gains, and observation scores cross-validated one another. They concluded that the Tripod® survey provides a valid and reliable measure of instructional quality. Survey items pertain to individual classrooms and results provide confidential feedback to a teacher about a specific classroom.[20] The surveys are designed using Tripod's 7Cs™ framework summarized in box 1. Each of seven instructional quality components is measured using an index of multiple survey items crafted to measure the respective construct. In addition, students answer questions about their own skills, attitudes, effort, and behavior.

BOX 1

Tripod's 7Cs Components

- **Care** concerns whether the teacher develops supportive relationships with students and is attentive to their feelings. *"My teacher in this class really tries to understand how students feel about things"* or *"My teacher seems to know if something is bothering me."*
- **Confer** concerns the degree to which the teacher elicits ideas from students and welcomes their feedback. *"My teacher welcomes my ideas and suggestions"* or *"My teacher wants us to share our thoughts."* Classrooms that students rate high on **confer** are more "student centered" than those where only the teacher's perspective is valued.
- **Captivate** pertains to how effectively the teacher stimulates student interest. A reverse-coded item in this category is *"This class does not keep my attention—I get bored."* A positively worded item is *"My teacher makes lessons interesting."*
- **Clarify** concerns how effectively the teacher is able to help students understand lessons, especially with regard to concepts students may find difficult. *"My teacher explains difficult things clearly."*
- **Consolidate** concerns making learning coherent and checking for understanding. *"My teacher takes time to summarize what we learn each day" and "My teacher checks to make sure we understand what s/he is teaching us."*
- **Challenge** concerns both effort and rigor and a teacher's insistence that students work hard and persist in the face of difficulty. *"My teacher accepts nothing less than our best effort"* and *"My teacher wants us to really understand the material, not just memorize it."*
- **Classroom Management** concerns the degree to which the class is both well behaved and on task. *"Students in this class behave the way my teacher wants them to"* and "*Our class stays busy and doesn't waste time."*

What Upper Elementary Students Say across 2,700 Classrooms

To assess whether BYMOC have equal access to high-quality teaching in upper elementary schools, I examine third-, fourth-, and fifth-grade classrooms that completed surveys from 2012–15. The data are not nationally representative, but instead represent districts where officials chose to use particular versions of Tripod surveys for teacher feedback.[21] All are in the US and most are urban. What I report

below is based mostly on a subsample of 2,700 classroom surveys that included self-assessment variables important for the present analysis. Eighty percent of the observations in the subsample are from 3 districts and the rest are from schools in 19 other districts. I make no adjustments for student socioeconomic backgrounds because my interest is in differences in learning environments to which students actually have access, not in explaining what those environments *would be* if all students came from the same background.

Teaching Quality in Upper Elementary

I begin by asking whether, on average, BYMOC report lower-quality instruction than white and Asian males in the same classroom. The answer is that **care** is the only 7Cs component on which BYMOC rate teachers lower than their white and Asian classmates. However, even this miniscule difference of only 0.05 standard deviation disappears when comparing boys who report the same level of attention and obedience in class. Other than **care**, BYMOC actually tend to rate teaching slightly more favorably.[22] There is no evidence from the 2,700 upper elementary classrooms that BYMOC perceive teaching as less effective than their white and Asian male classmates. Again, this is the pattern when making only within-classroom comparisons between groups.

Alternatively, we can ask about differences *between* classes instead of *within* classes. If BYMOC have less access to well-taught classrooms, and consequently are more concentrated in poorly taught classrooms, then ratings of instructional quality should be lower for classes with higher percentages of BYMOC.

When I analyze between-classroom differences in instructional quality ratings using only the classroom racial composition as a predictor, I find that classrooms with higher percentages of students of color rate teachers lower on *care*, *confer*, *challenge*, and *classroom management*.[23] But the percentage of students of color does not predict negatively for the other 7Cs components and sometimes predicts positively. Stated differently, classrooms with higher percentages of non-Asian students of color tend to judge teachers as moderately less caring, less communicative, less challenging, and less effective at managing conduct.

In addition, upper elementary classrooms with more students of color tend to differ from others in their responses to the following three items:

- *"Sometimes my teacher says that I don't pay attention."*

- *"I obey the rules in this class."*
- *"When you were younger, what kind of marks (or grades) did you usually get in school?"* Students who respond that the marks they received were either *"some good, some not"* or *"not good"* are classified as *lower achievers*. Others are classified as *higher achievers*.

Controlling for responses to these three items completely wipes away any negative association of teaching quality ratings with the percentage males or females of color,[24] reminiscent of the Cornwell, Mustard, and Van Parys study discussed above. Recall that including the teacher's assessment of how well students paid attention using the ATL metric removed the appearance of teacher bias in assessing male achievement.

Indeed, each of the studies cited concerning the school years dealt with disparities in attentiveness, not just in reading and math skills. Recall the Claessens, Duncan, and Engel finding that kindergarten ratings of attentiveness helped predict fifth-grade reading and math skills but kindergarten socioemotional behaviors did not. Given the importance of attentiveness, let us look at group-level differences for "*Sometimes my teacher says I don't pay attention*." Again, the 2,700-classroom subsample is used where this variable is available.

Figure 6 shows patterns for Asians, whites, Latinos, blacks, and Native Americans by gender and achievement level. Students could respond on a scale of 1 to 5: *No, never*; *Mostly not*; *Maybe/Sometimes*; *Mostly yes*; or *Yes, always*. The figure groups the lower two and upper two values to create a three-way distinction. Notice that the percentages responding "*Mostly"* or "*Always"* are small—generally less than 20 percent—equivalent to between 1 and 4 students in a classroom of 20. Of course, even a few inattentive students can be disruptive. If the "*Maybe/Sometimes*" category is also considered, the numbers are notably larger. For males in the *lower achiever* category, from 55 percent of Asians to 65 percent of blacks report at least sometimes being accused of not paying attention. In each achiever status bracket, whites and Asians are the least likely to report being accused of not paying attention, while blacks and Native Americans are the most likely. Boys in each category are more likely to be accused than girls, and lower achievers are more likely to be accused than higher achievers. These patterns align with what is known from other sources about between-group differences (Duncan and Magnuson 2011).

The survey item "*My teacher seems to think that I will be successful when I grow up"* was used to look for race and gender differences in student perceptions of teacher expectations. If teachers communicate systematically lower expectations for BYMOC in upper elementary school, students do not seem to perceive it. I found that within each race/ethnicity and gender group, lower achievers

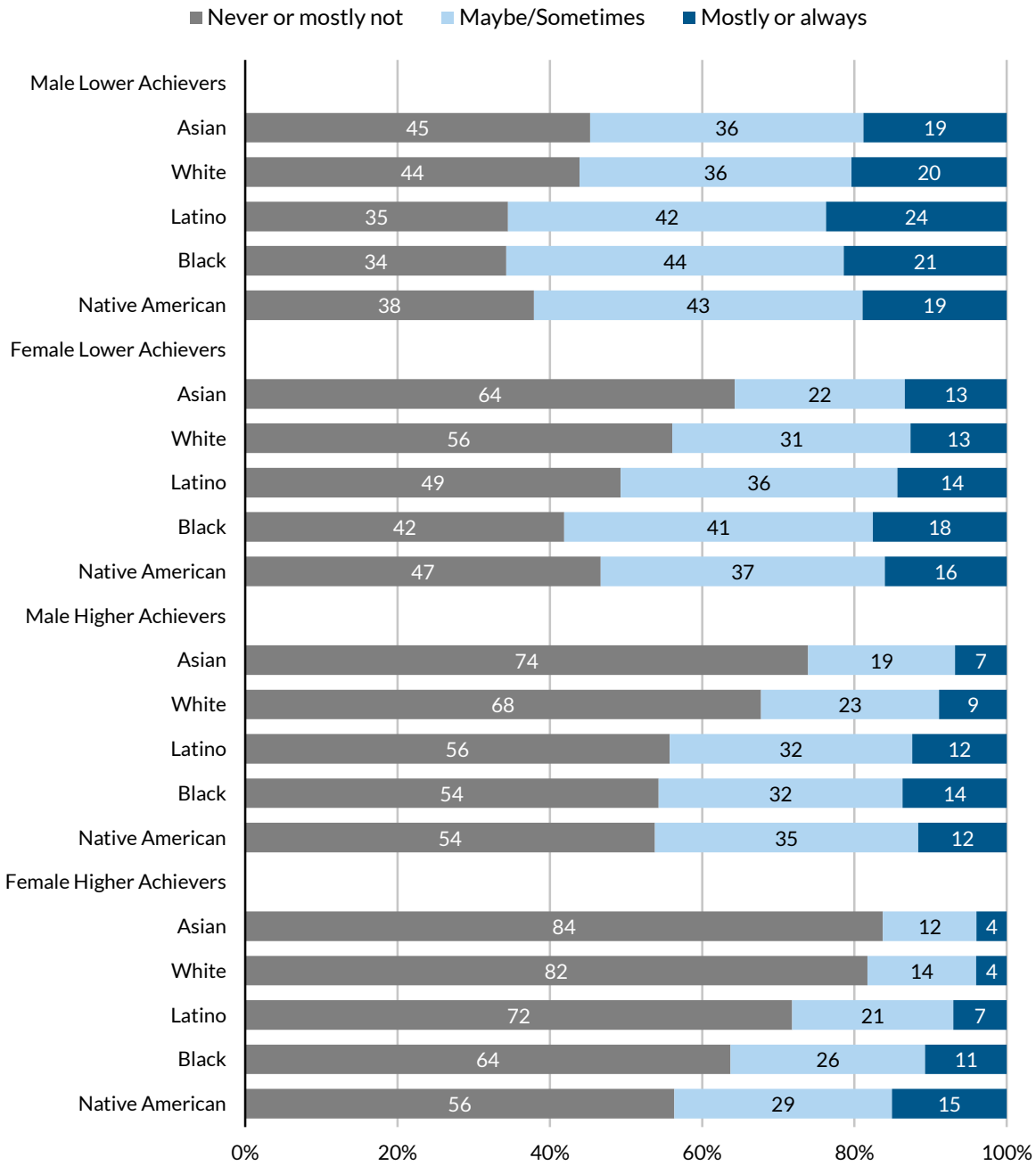
reported somewhat lower teacher expectations compared to higher achievers and girls reported slightly higher teacher expectations than boys. However, there was no clear pattern of lower perceived expectations for BYMOC either within or between classrooms (figure 7).

Generally, it appears BYMOC in upper elementary classrooms do not perceive systematically lower-quality instruction than their white male classmates. There are differences between classrooms, where quality of instruction is rated lower the greater the percentage of students of color, but these are entirely predicted by self-reports of behavior and academic background. At the upper elementary level, the problem seems to be the concentration of disadvantage rather than a systematic allocation of weaker teachers to students of color. As long as concentrated disadvantage exists, teachers need special preparation to learn how the most successful teachers in such schools serve their students. This will require policy supports at the district level, quality professional development approaches and resources, and school-level leadership.

FIGURE 6

"Sometimes My Teacher Says That I Don't Pay Attention"

Responses by race/ethnicity, gender, and high/low achiever patterns

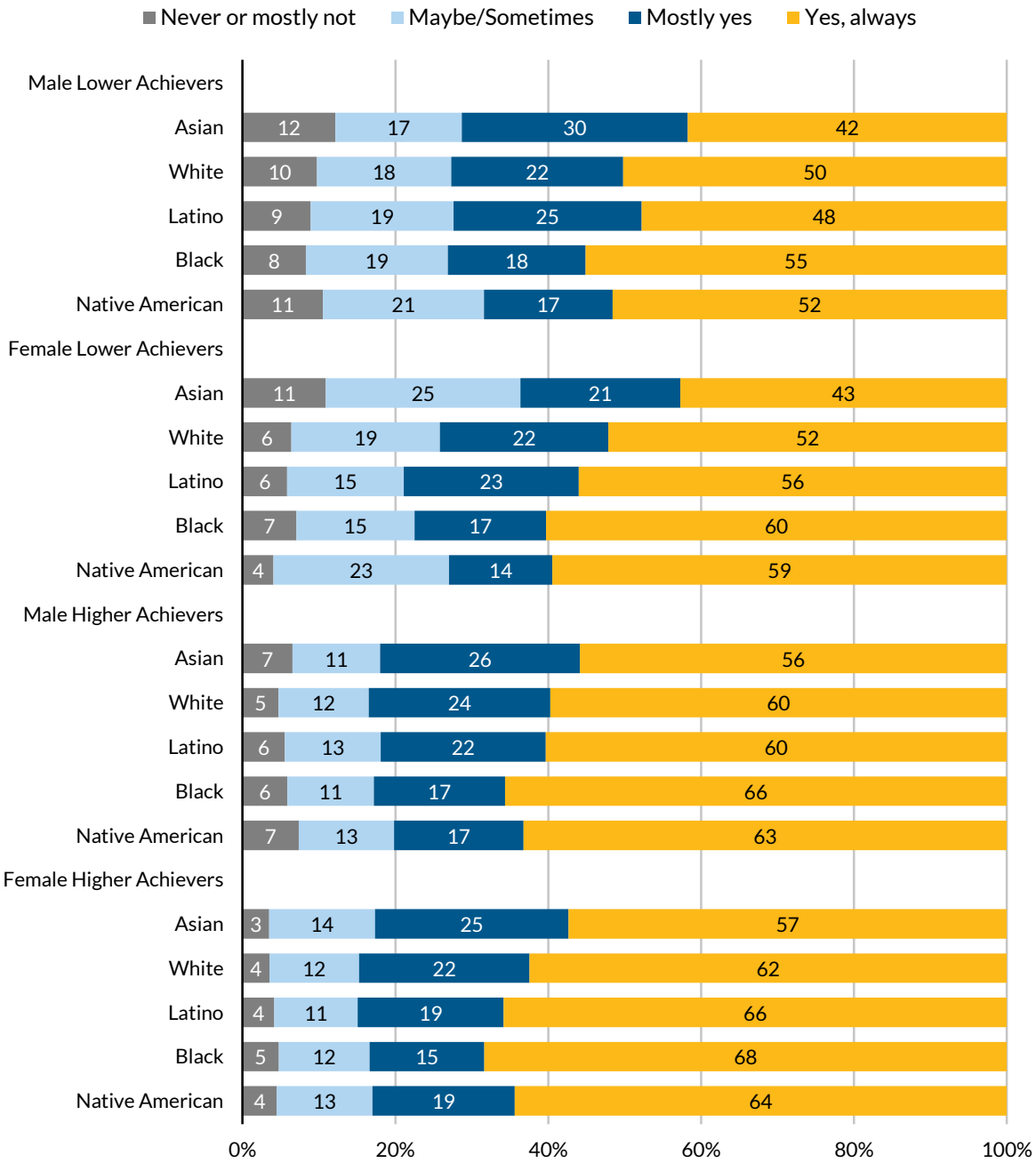


Note: Sample size = 2,700 upper elementary classrooms.

FIGURE 7

"My Teacher Seems to Think That I Will Be Successful when I Grow Up"

Responses by race/ethnicity, gender, and high/low achiever patterns



Note: Sample size = 2,700 upper elementary classrooms.

Concentrated Disadvantage and Misbehavior Grades Three to Five

Racial segregation has fallen over the past four decades, but income segregation has risen (Reardon, Fox, and Townsend 2015). Hence, lower-income students of color tend to be concentrated in schools with other less-advantaged children as upwardly mobile families of color have dispersed to more racially integrated communities. Racial compositions of schools in the Tripod sample are not quite nationally representative, but they reflect the same type of income-linked racial concentration seen in many places. Table 1 shows high levels of racial segregation for both the Tripod subsample and the nation. It also shows that white students nationally are much more concentrated in schools with 0-9.9 percent students of color than in the Tripod sample, so between-school differences between whites and students of color may be even larger than represented in the analysis below.

TABLE 1

Racial Composition, Tripod Data Analysis vs. Schools Nationally

	Percentage Students of Color			
	0–9.9	**10–49.9**	**50–89.9**	**90–100**
	National, Row Percentages for Public Schools 2005-2006			
White	37	50	12	1
Black	2	25	35	38
Latino	2	20	38	40
Asian	6	38	40	16
Native American	7	44	28	21
	Tripod, Row Percentages for Upper Elementary Schools*			
White	2	59	37	2
Black	0	9	61	31
Latino	0	10	76	14
Asian	0	61	36	3
Native American	0	21	55	23
	Tripod, Row Percentages for Secondary Schools**			
White	2	72	25	1
Black	0	24	59	18
Latino	0	17	71	13
Asian	0	61	36	3
Native American	0	14	22	63

Source: Pew Hispanic Center analysis of US Department of Education Common Core of Data Public Elementary/Secondary School Universe Survey data for 2005–06.

Notes: *This is for the sample of 2,700 classrooms for which key variables were available and most of the upper elementary analysis in the paper is based on. Eighty percent of the observations in this subsample are from three urban districts.

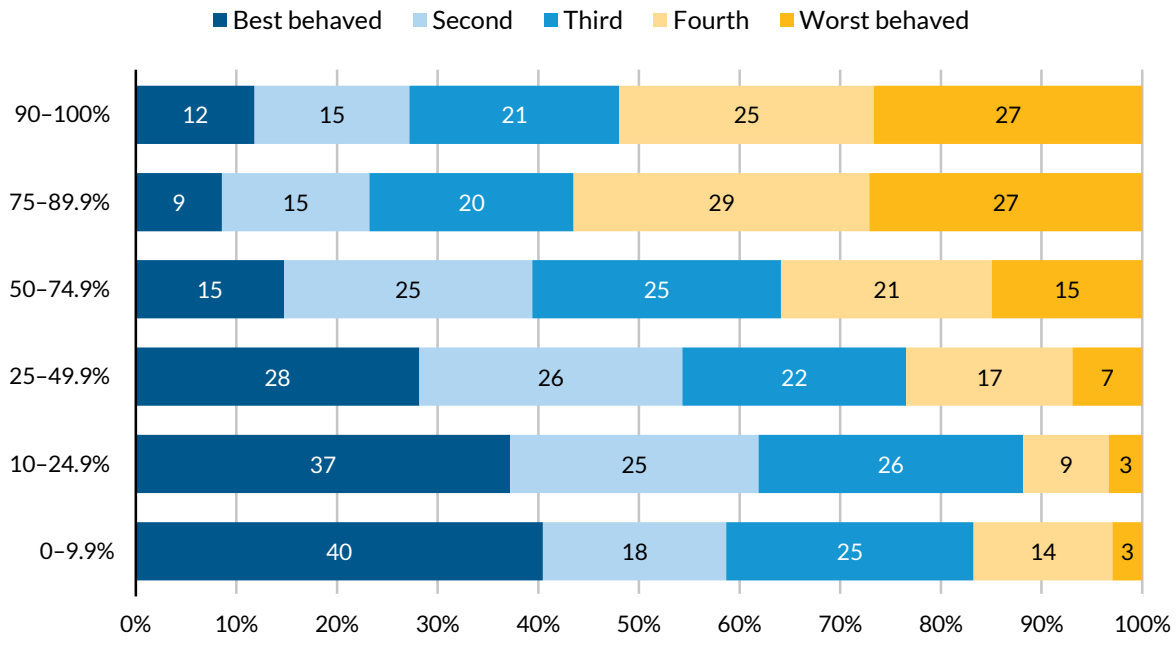
**This is for the sample of 290 schools and 14,270 classrooms for which key variables were available and most of the secondary school analysis in the paper is based on. Sixty percent of the observations in this subsample are from four districts.

Using the Tripod data, I divided upper elementary classrooms into racial-composition categories, ranging from 0 to 9.9 percent students of color through 90 to 100 percent. I then divided classes into behavior quintiles based on classroom-average responses to the statement "*Students behave so badly in our class that it slows down our learning.*" Figure 8 shows the distribution. Among classrooms with 75–89.9 percent and 90–100 percent students of color, more than half of all students are in classrooms that rate among the worst two quintiles on behavior that slows the class down. Conversely, in classrooms where fewer than 25 percent are students of color, only between 10 and 20 percent of students are in the worst two quintiles.

FIGURE 8

Percentage of the Sample in Each Quintile of the Between-Classroom Distribution of Behavior, by Classroom Racial Composition

By share of classroom population that is students of color



Note: Sample size = 2,700 upper elementary classrooms.

Behavior differences between the quintiles are large. In the worst-behaved quintile, only 21 percent of students responded to the question of whether behavior is so bad that it slows down learning with "*No, never*" or "*Mostly not.*" Even for students in the second-worst quintile, only 36 percent responded "*No, never*" or "*Mostly not.*" In other words, in the worst-behaved 40 percent of classrooms,

where BYMOC are overrepresented, most students report that behavior at least sometimes slows down their learning.

Children in the most-segregated schools have limited access to well-behaved, consistently on-task learning environments. The Bill & Melinda Gates Foundation Measures of Effective Teaching project showed that being in such an environment is an important predictor of annual learning gains on standardized reading and math tests (Kane, McCaffrey, and Staiger 2010, 2012).

Despite the general pattern, it is important to emphasize that very well-behaved, on-task classrooms where most students are children of color are also represented in the data. Twelve percent of classrooms with 90–100 percent students of color are in the top behavior quintile. In these classes, 80 percent of students responded "*No, never*" or "*Mostly not*" to "*Students behave so badly in our class that it slows down our learning*." This represents hundreds of classrooms serving the same types of children as those where students are less well-behaved.

Still, it is clear that schools and classrooms with higher percentages of students of color tend to exhibit lower levels of social control, the result of a shortage of the assets on which social control depends. One such asset, as we have seen, is development during the preschool years of academic and attention skills. A second is families with fathers in the home. In tabulations not shown here, I found that children of every race and gender report at least slightly better behavior in school if they live with their father. A third is family social and financial resources sufficient to avoid frequent residential moves and high absenteeism (Raudenbush, Jean, and Art 2011). And a fourth asset is stability in school personnel. It is difficult to sustain a strong school culture with continual teacher and administrative turnover, and it is difficult to avoid high turnover in schools with difficult environments. In a study of how the neighborhoods surrounding schools affect teachers' career decisions, Don Boyd et al. (2011, 378) conclude:

> Whether the effects operate through schools, neighborhoods, or a combination of both, to the extent that students with fewer supports for education are increasingly concentrated in a subset of schools and are more dependent on schools for their educational opportunities, the lower supply of teachers to these schools as well as the high turnover rates can have increasingly detrimental effects on achievement and attainment.

Their data came from the New York City area. They report that schools with high percentages of African American and low-achieving students have the most difficulty attracting teachers.

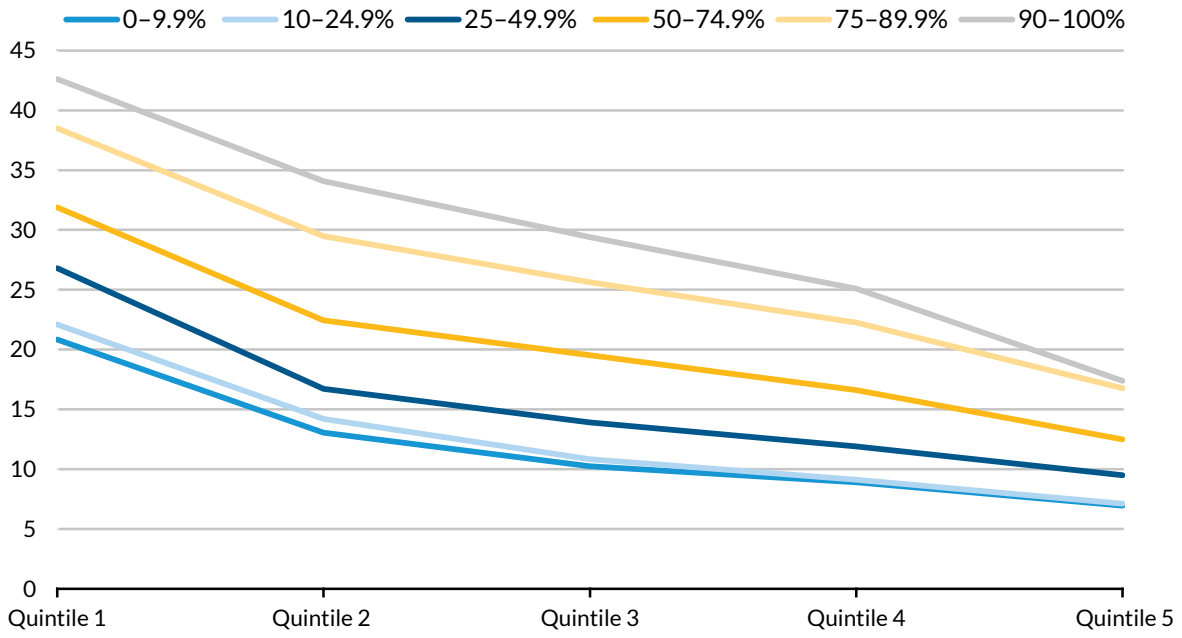
Given the greater difficulty of some school and classroom environments, it is important and reassuring to understand that no matter the racial composition of a classroom, better teaching is still associated with better behavior and more learning. This is illustrated by figure 9. I formed a composite

of *captivate*, *clarify*, and *challenge*—the 7Cs components that most strongly predicted effective *classroom management* in our other research[25]—and used the composite to divide classrooms into quintiles. Higher quintiles by this measure are classrooms where lessons are more interesting (higher on captivate), where teachers explain things more clearly (higher on clarify), and where students are pressed to think rigorously and persist in the face of difficulty (higher on challenge).

FIGURE 9

Classroom Behavior Is Better when Teaching Quality Is Rated Higher

By share of classroom population that is students of color and quintiles of classroom teaching quality index



Notes: Sample size = 30,500 upper elementary classrooms. X-axis unit of measurement is classroom teaching quality quintile (average of captivate, clarify, and challenge scores). Y-axis unit of measurement is percentage responding that student behavior in the class mostly or always slows down learning.

To distinguish how poorly behaved a classroom is, the y-axis of figure 9 uses the percentage of students that responded either "*Yes, mostly*" or "*Yes, always*" to "*Students behave so badly in our class that it slows down our learning*." This figure uses the full sample of 30,500 classrooms since it only requires the variables included in the larger sample.[26] It shows that students are less likely to report disruptive behavior in classrooms where lessons are more captivating, clear, and challenging (represented by quintiles on the x-axis). However, that the six lines remain distinct from one another is a reminder that behavior tends to be worse in classrooms where children of color are more concentrated. Conversely,

the downward slope of all lines indicates better instruction leads to better behavior even in the most segregated environments.

Disparities in Secondary School Quality

The previous section used Tripod surveys tailored for elementary schools. In this section, I use versions developed for grades 6–12. I find that exposure to high-quality instruction appears more unequal in secondary schools than in elementary schools. For vivid evidence, I turn to Tripod data from 290 secondary schools and 15,000 classrooms from a cross-section of mostly urban communities. Again, communities are not selected to be nationally representative, but they nonetheless reflect commonly occurring racial concentrations. Students were surveyed from 2012 to 2015.

In addition to the Tripod 7Cs index of teaching quality, this particular survey included an index of whole school climate and several measures of student engagement. The school climate index consists of the following seven items is focused on safety and trust and:[27]

- *"At this school, I must be ready to fight to defend myself."*
- *"This school feels like a safe place to me."*
- *"Teachers in the hallways treat me with respect, even if they don't know me."*
- *"I treat the adults at this school with respect, even if I don't know them."*
- *"The way adults treat me at this school makes me angry."*
- *"I would quiet down if someone said I was talking too loudly in the hallway."*
- *"I trust other students at this school, even if I don't know them."*

From the perspective of one student, the school climate index is the average his or her responses to these seven items. To get a whole-school summary measure, I take the average across all students in the school. Then I order the schools by rank and place them in quintiles, with the top quintile (quintile 5) representing schools with the best school climates.

To find out which students have access to classrooms with the highest-rated teaching, I rank classes by a composite combining all the Tripod 7Cs components (see box 1 above) then divide the full ranking into quintiles.

The two quintile rankings—one for classroom teaching quality and the other for school climate—allow us to form a 5x5 matrix examining racial differences in access. Table 2 shows the percentage of each group in each cell of the matrix. I have shaded four cells in the upper-left corner and four in the lower-right corner of each matrix. The upper-left shading indicates students in the bottom two quintiles of classroom teaching quality **and** school climate. Likewise, the bottom-right shading indicates students in the top two quintiles by both criteria.

TABLE 2

Patterns of Disparity in Access to Teaching Quality and School Climate

		Quintiles of the Tripod School Climate Index**				
	Tripod 7Cs* classroom quintile	**1st**	**2nd**	**3rd**	**4th**	**Top**
Whites n=87,045	1st	**1.9**	**3.4**	2.2	4.0	4.0
	2nd	**2.0**	**3.5**	2.7	4.3	4.7
	3rd	1.9	3.7	2.5	4.9	7.2
	4th	1.7	4.1	3.3	**6.4**	**7.3**
	Top	1.6	4.4	4.1	**6.7**	**7.8**
Blacks n=52,310	1st	**13.3**	**4.8**	2.7	1.7	0.9
	2nd	**10.0**	**4.8**	3.1	2.0	0.9
	3rd	7.7	5.3	2.8	2.6	1.2
	4th	5.7	4.9	2.8	**3.4**	**1.2**
	Top	5.0	4.9	3.0	**4.0**	**1.5**
Latinos n=41,677	1st	**4.3**	**2.5**	6.8	2.1	1.9
	2nd	**3.5**	**3.6**	9.8	3.0	3.4
	3rd	2.2	3.3	8.6	3.1	3.7
	4th	1.6	2.8	9.0	**3.0**	**4.3**
	Top	1.5	2.3	7.0	**3.2**	**3.7**
Asians n=8,227	1st	**4.2**	**2.3**	2.2	1.9	5.2
	2nd	**4.5**	**2.7**	2.8	1.9	6.3
	3rd	4.9	2.3	2.7	2.2	9.8
	4th	3.7	2.7	3.5	**2.6**	**9.3**
	Top	4.2	4.0	4.8	**2.2**	**7.5**
Native Americans n=3,894	1st	**7.3**	**16.7**	13.3	1.2	0.6
	2nd	**3.8**	**5.3**	8.6	1.6	1.1
	3rd	2.7	7.4	6.8	1.2	1.1
	4th	1.3	3.7	5.1	**1.5**	**1.0**
	Top	0.8	2.7	3.3	**1.3**	**0.9**

Source: Survey responses from students in 290 secondary schools.

Notes: Cell percentages for each racial group in each row and column of an index for classroom instructional quality quintiles (rows) and school climate quintiles (columns), 290 schools. Each block of 25 cells represents one racial/ethnic group and totals to 100 percent of that group.

* Quintiles of the between-classroom distribution of composite Tripod 7Cs scores.

** Quintiles of the between-school distribution of the Tripod school climate index.

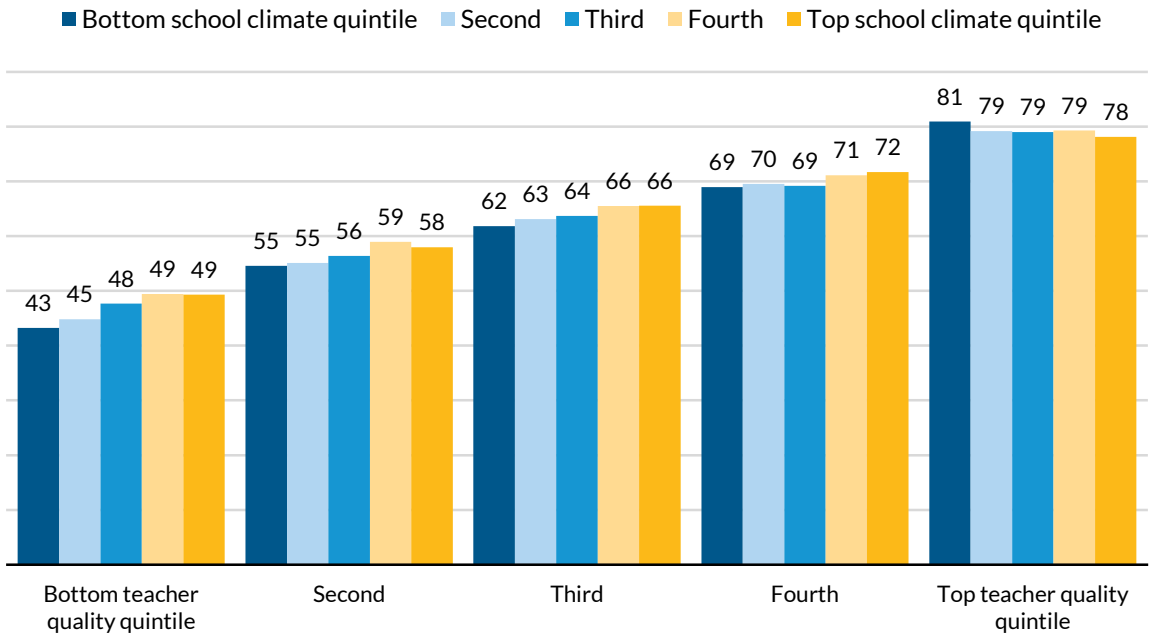
Whites are almost three times more likely to be in the top two quintiles of both measures (28.2 percent) than in the bottom two (10.7 percent). Among black and Native American students, 32.8 and 33.1 percent, respectively, are in the upper–left (or worst) corner while only 10.1 percent of blacks and 4.6 percent of Native Americans are in the lower–right (or best) corner. Latinos and Asians have more access to high-quality classrooms than blacks and Native Americans but worse access than whites. Please recall that I do not find meaningful differences in how these groups rate teaching when in the same classrooms. Also, other work has cross-validated the Tripod 7Cs components with test-score measures and classroom-level observations by trained experts (R. Ferguson and Danielson 2014; Kane, McCaffrey, and Staiger 2010, 2012), so these results are serious indicators of disparity (Ferguson and Danielson 2014).

To show how the disparities in table 2 are related to student engagement, figure 10 shows percentages of students responding "*totally true*" or "*mostly true*" to the statement "*I have pushed myself hard to completely understand my lessons in this class*." Among students in the bottom quintile for both school climate and teaching quality, only 43 percent responded either "*totally*" or "*mostly true*" compared to roughly 80 percent of students in the top quintile of teacher quality. The figure does not show subgroups. However, examining the subgroups, I find the same pattern within each race and gender category.[28]

FIGURE 10

"I Have Pushed Myself Hard to Completely Understand My Lessons in This Class"

Share of all students responding mostly true or totally true by school climate and classroom teaching quality quintiles



Note: Sample size = 264,370 students.

It is important to note that the most variation in responses to "*I have pushed myself hard to completely understand my lessons in this class*" is associated with teaching-quality quintiles and not school-climate quintiles. It is not widely understood that the most variation in teaching quality occurs within schools rather than between schools. Most schools have a much broader range of instructional effectiveness than is apparent from looking only at school averages. An individual student can have a great person-environment fit in one classroom and a terrible fit in another. They can also have a high- or low-quality fit in the hallways, and this can have implications for whether they get into trouble.

Disparities in Respect outside the Classroom

Tripod surveys for 290 secondary schools included the item, "*Teachers in the hallways treat with me respect, even if they don't know me.*" Students responded on a five-point scale from "*never*" to "*always.*" Analyzing only within-school variation, I find no statistically significant racial/ethnic differences in how

low-achieving males (self-reported GPAs of C+ or lower) perceive the level of respect they receive from teachers in the hallways.[29] However, such differences do exist among higher achievers (self-reported GPAs of B or higher). White high achievers feel the most respected by teachers outside the classroom, followed by Latinos and Asians, respectively, with black and Native American high achievers feeling the least respected. Again, these are within-school differences.

FIGURE 11

"Teachers in the Hallways Treat Me with Respect Even if They Don't Know Me"

Responses of whites and blacks by gender and grade-point average (GPA) range

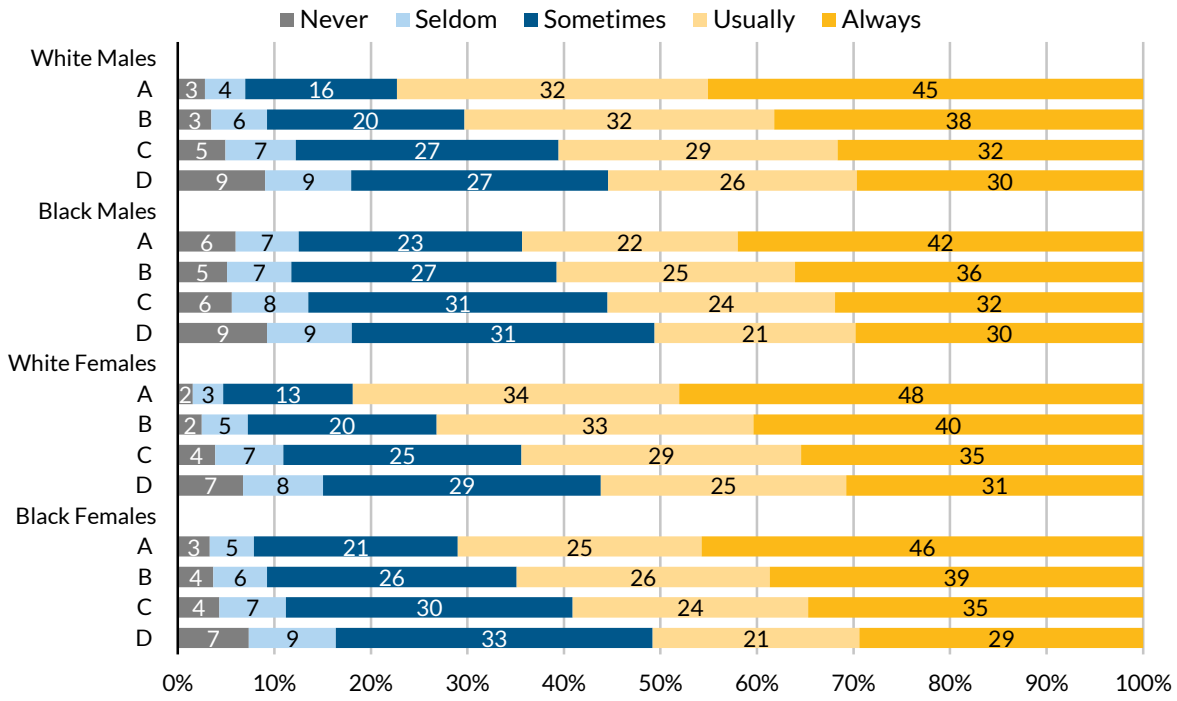
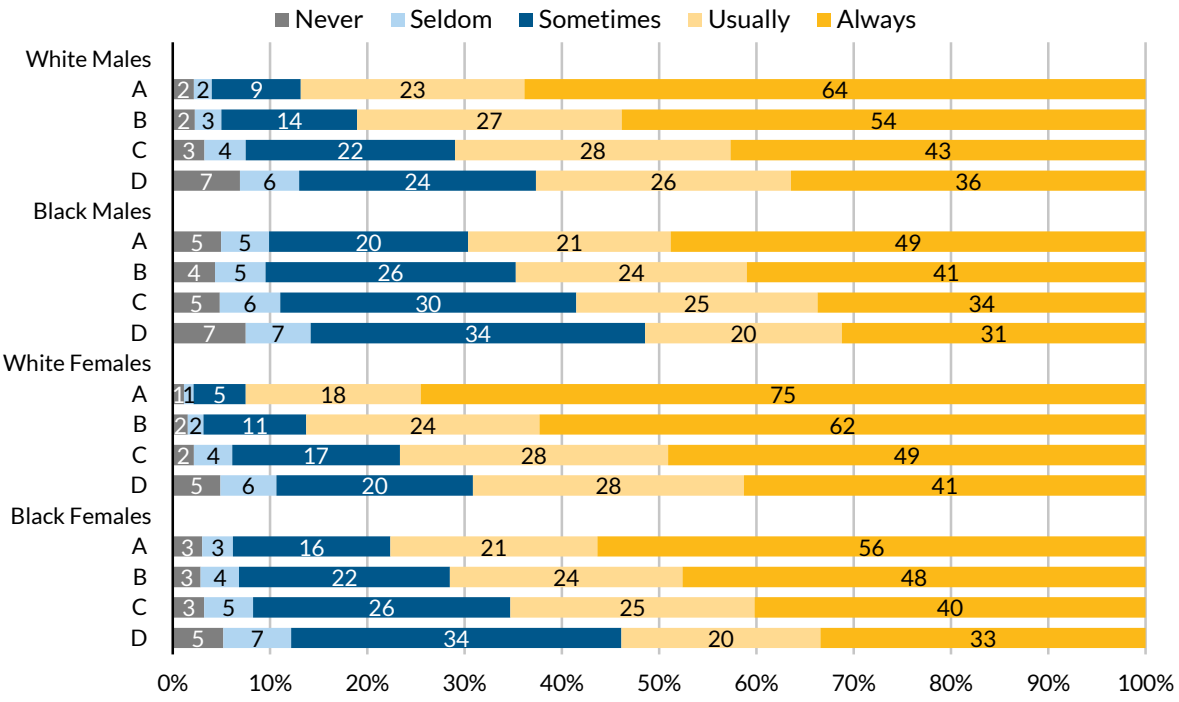


Figure 11 focuses just on blacks and whites, the groups that perceive the least and most respect from teachers in the hallway. It is important to stipulate "in the hallway" because within-classroom differences tend to be small to nonexistent. Figure 11 shows patterns in the raw, unadjusted data by race, gender, and GPA for samples of 20,000–35,000 observations from each of the four race/gender groups. The numbers in figure 11 are raw tabulations that reflect a combination of within- and between-school differences, but like the within-school statistical analysis referenced in the preceding paragraph, the largest racial differences occur among students with GPAs of B or higher. Among males with GPAs in the A range, 23 percent of whites reported that they are never, seldom, or only sometimes treated with respect by teachers in the hallways compared to 36 percent of blacks. A similar disparity exists among white (18 percent) and black (29 percent) females.

FIGURE 12

"I Treat the Adults at This School with Respect, Even if I Don't Know Them"

Responses of whites and blacks by gender and grade-point average (GPA) range



Do black high achievers treat teachers less respectfully in return? I consider responses to the statement "*I treat the adults at this school with respect, even if I don't know them.*" Levels of agreement for BYMOC from **all** GPA groups (except for Latinos with GPAs of C and below) were lower compared to whites by statistically significant margins. Blacks and Native Americans (again, at every GPA level) were least likely to agree with the statement. Figure 12 shows that, among A students, 64 percent of whites but only 49 percent of blacks report always treating teachers in the hallways with respect.

Peer Pressures, Bad Behaviors, and Hidden Ambition

Being a member of a disrespected group and the associated failures of person-environment fit can entangle BYMOC in negative feedback loops. As disrespected groups, they are the most likely to disrespect in kind. They may learn that being deferential to adults—especially those who seem disrespectful—can be perceived as not cool. Fear of social repercussions can lead students to behave publicly in ways that they privately disapprove of. Three survey items help document the problem:

- *"I do things I don't want to do because of pressure from other students."*

- *"At this school, I must be ready to fight to defend myself."*
- *"I worry that people might think I am too serious about my school work."*

FIGURE 13

"I Do Things I Don't Want to Do Because of Pressure from Other Students"

Responses of males by race/ethnicity and share of school population that is students of color

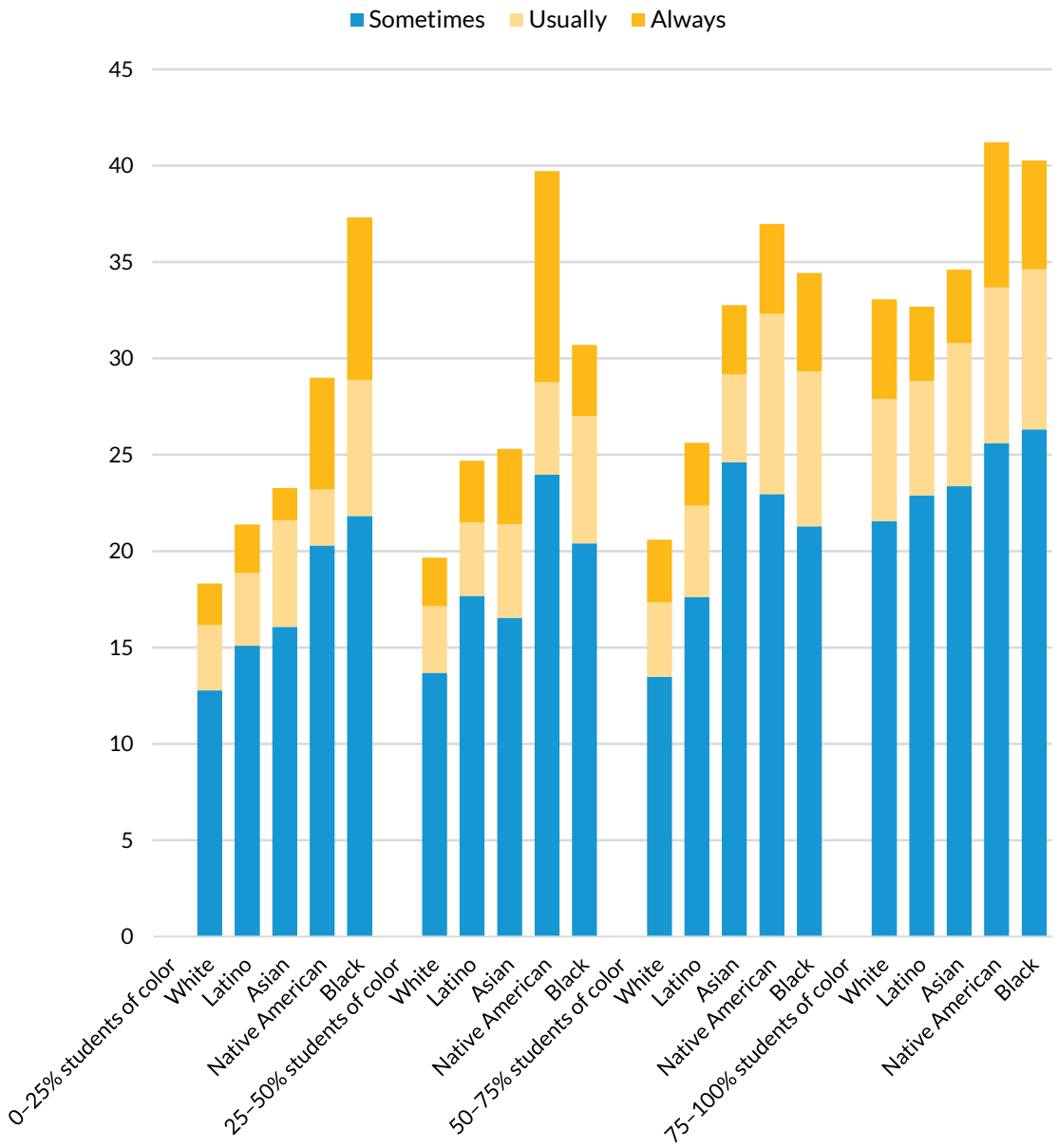


FIGURE 14

"At This School, I Must Be Ready to Fight to Defend Myself"

Responses of males by race/ethnicity and share of school population that is students of color

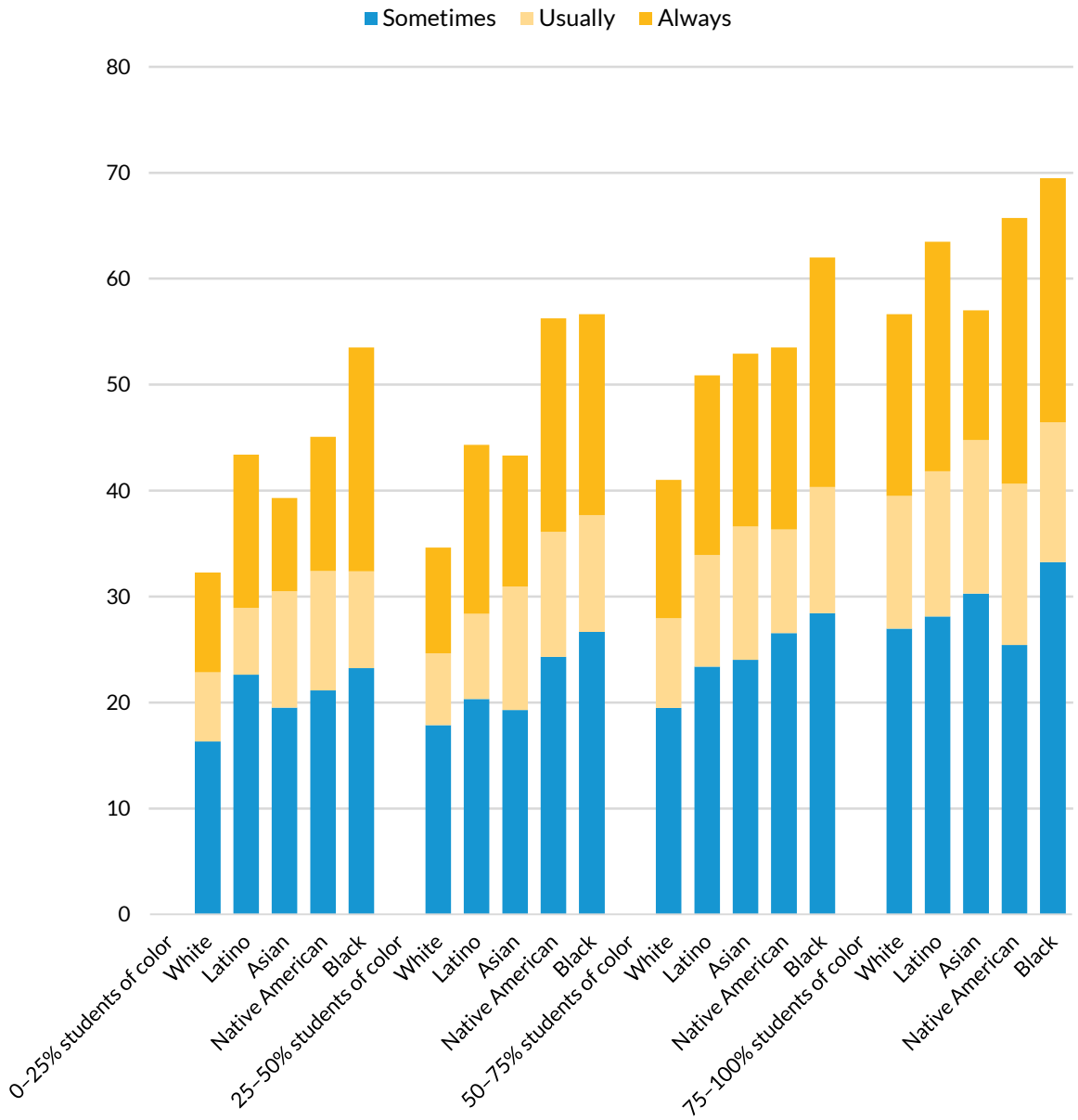
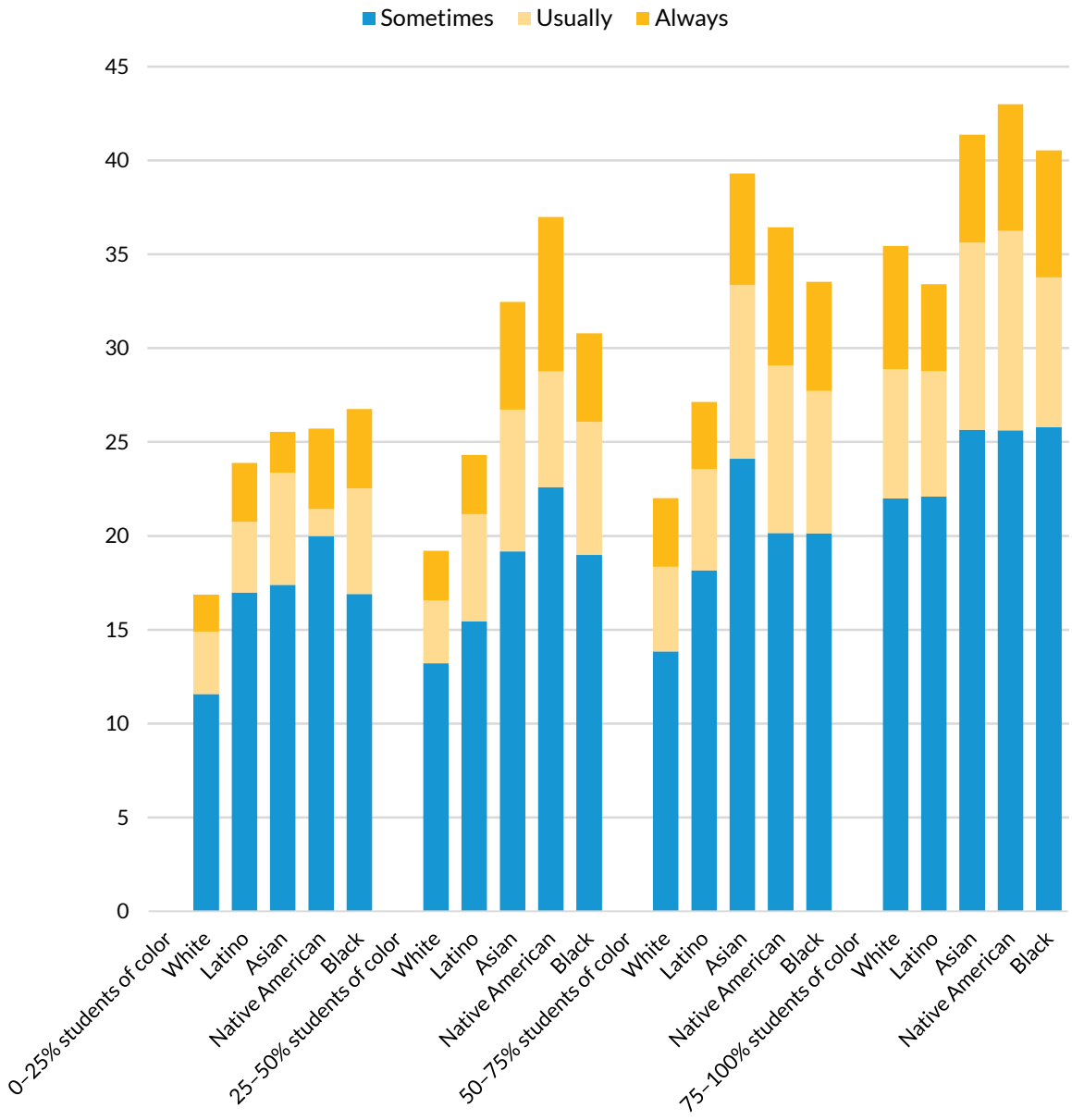


FIGURE 15

"I Worry That People Might Think I Am Too Serious about My School Work"

Responses of males by race/ethnicity and share of school population that is students of color



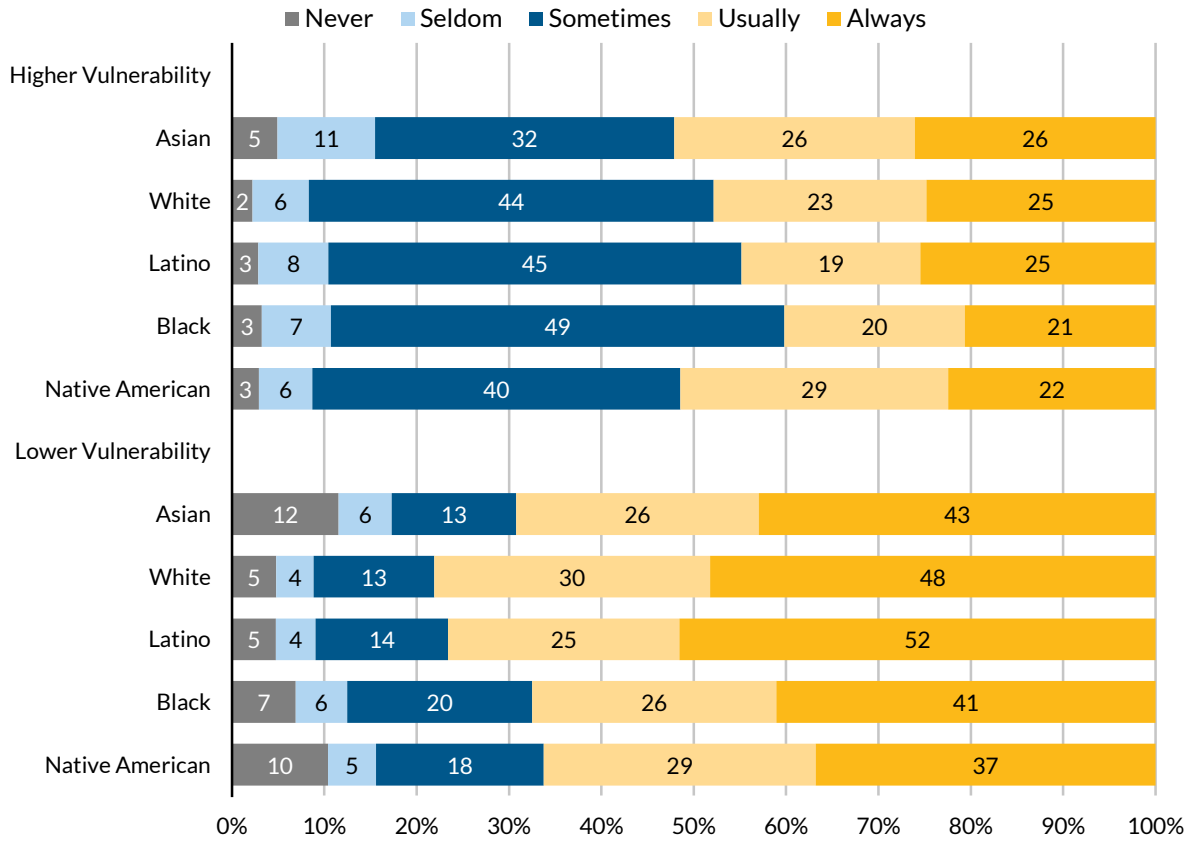
Figures 13, 14, and 15 show the responses of white, Latino, Asian, Native American, and black males in secondary schools across the 290-school sample. Results are shown for four racial compositions, from schools with 0–25 percent students of color to 75–100 percent. In each figure, agreement with these statements tends to be higher where students of color are more heavily represented. However, it is noteworthy that between 35 and 40 percent of black males in *all four* school composition categories

agree that they sometimes, usually, or always do things they don't want to do because of pressure from other students. By this measure, black and Native American males are the most socially conflicted of all the groups and the most ensnared in a predicament.

FIGURE 16

"I Treat the Adults at This School with Respect, Even if I Don't Know Them"

Responses of lower achieving males by race/ethnicity and vulnerability to peer pressure

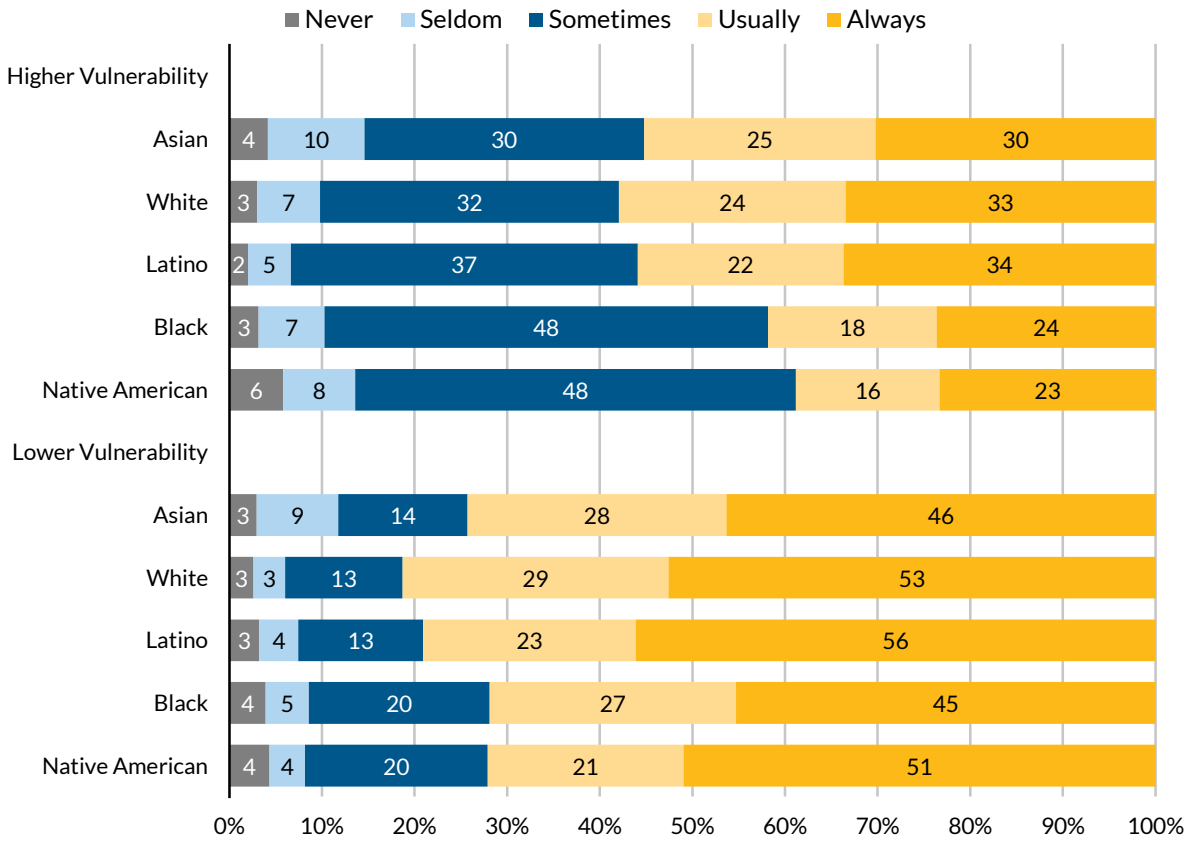


It seems that many youth who disrespect teachers do so as an expression of social conformity rather than a reflection of rebellion or personal values. Figures 16 (for males) and 17 (for females) support this view. Both figures are restricted to *low-achiever* students, meaning those with self-reported GPAs of C+ or below. Students who agreed that they sometimes, usually, or always do things they don't want to because of pressure from other students are said to have *higher vulnerability to peer pressure.* Among black males vulnerable to peer pressure, only 21 percent said they always treat teachers with respect and only 20 percent said they usually do, a total of 41 percent. In contrast, 41 percent of black males deemed not vulnerable said they always treat teachers with respect and 26 percent said they usually do, a total of 67 percent.

FIGURE 17

"I Treat the Adults at This School with Respect, Even if I Don't Know Them"

Responses of lower achieving females by race/ethnicity and vulnerability to peer pressure



Could it be that a majority of BYMOC, even among lower achievers, already have the right values but lack supports and opportunities to live those values? Males of different groups responded very similarly to the statement, "*In this class, it is important to me to thoroughly understand my coursework,*"[30] and at each grade level from 6th through 12th, black males agreed more often than whites and sometimes as often as Asians. However, all groups, and BYMOC much more than whites, reported behaviors that *mask* their effort and desire to do well in school. In response to the statement, *"I sometimes pretend that I'm not trying hard in this class when I really am,"* more than half of blacks, Latinos, and Native Americans, but fewer than 40 percent of whites, reported that they hide effort (figure 18). Blacks and Native Americans were also almost twice as likely as whites to endorse the statement, "*Sometimes I hold back from doing my best in this class because of what others might say or think*" (figure 19).

FIGURE 18

"Sometimes I Pretend I'm Not Trying Hard in This Class when I Really Am"

Share of males responding somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true by race/ethnicity and grade

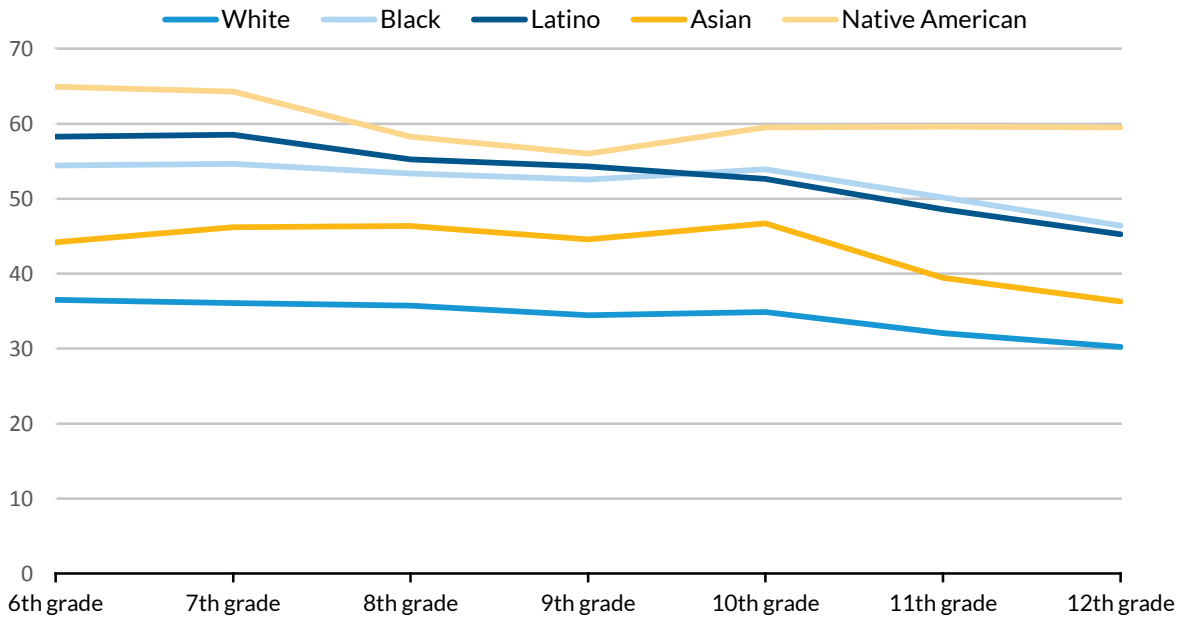
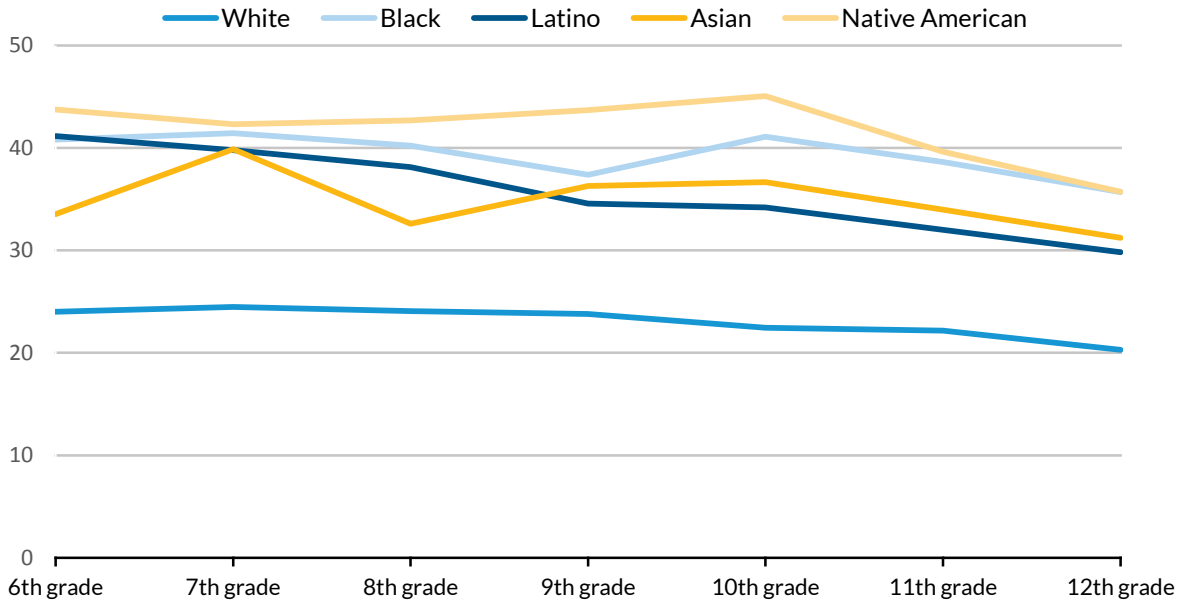


FIGURE 19

"Sometimes I Hold Back from Doing My Best in This Class Because of What Others Might Say or Think"

Share of males responding somewhat true, mostly true, or totally true by race/ethnicity and grade



This discussion highlights a key aspect of the predicament: the tension between person-environment fit with teachers versus peers. The challenge of balancing peer-versus-adult demands may be especially stressful, particularly during the transition from elementary into middle school. The transition may be easier for high-achieving students from relatively well-off households in safe neighborhoods. However, less academically prepared students from less-advantaged households in dangerous neighborhoods must contend with both the fear of not being able to keep up academically and the fear of not being safe (A. Ferguson 2001).

The following passage is from Ann Arnett Ferguson's (2001, 120) book, *Bad Boys: Public Schools in the Making of Black Masculinity*. It quotes a boy named Jabari.

> There's a lot of people that are so afraid of going to seventh grade. ...They bring guns to school. ...There's this boy named Joey. He got five days suspension for bringing Mace to school because he was scared. He can't fight. ...There's this boy named Freddie in my class was fixing to beat up Joey and Joey was going to spray him with some Mace. So he gave it to Michael to hold for him so he wouldn't get in trouble. But Michael got caught and Joey got caught. Joey got five days suspension and Michael is in Juvenile Hall for a week.

Ferguson writes, "Children know that they have to learn how to take care of themselves, how to defend themselves. Friends become an essential line of defense and solidarity." There are similar passages in James Garbarino's (1999, 109) book, *Lost Boys: Why Our Sons Turn Violent and How We Can Save Them*. Garbarino writes, "...our children are learning at progressively earlier ages that adults can't protect you.". Young men of color often do what they think they need to do to achieve person-environment fit with the forces that seem most threatening.

Such predicaments can lead many BYMOC to comply with social norms that they privately disapprove of but publically accept and even impose onto others. Even inside the same schools and classrooms and with the same professed desires to learn, BYMOC were more likely than white males to report hiding effort, holding back, and misbehaving in ways that disguise their positive ambitions and sustain destructive stereotypes.

Cultural theorists might argue that these behaviors can (and often have) become enculturated in ways that make them difficult to deviate from even if youth have positive intentions. Individual change may require replacing negative influences with extended, intensive, and personalized attention from effective role models. Orlando Patterson and Ethan Fosse (2015), using the example of workplace norms, cite a case study in Boston. They write, "[W]hile they were prepared to learn nearly all of the declarative knowledge and most of the norms and values of the formal workplace, there was a real difficulty in presenting a smiling, conciliatory face...since this conflicted with the ingrained view that a 'mean mug' was essential for survival in the inner city" (Patterson and Fosse 2015, 552). The authors go

on to speculate that "a fundamental prerequisite for successfully persuading people to change are change agents who are either role models or persons with skills that are both admired and considered achievable." That *should be* the role of a really good teacher.

Disproportionality and Bias

In his book, *The Trouble with Black Boys*, Pedro Noguera (2008, xxi) summarizes the supposed trouble, writing that

- too often they [black boys] are assumed to be at risk because they are too aggressive, too loud, too violent, too dumb, too hard to control, too streetwise, and too focused on sports;
- most never have a chance to be thought of as smart and talented or to demonstrate talents in science, music, or literature;
- too often they are placed in schools where their needs for nurturing, support, and loving discipline are not met;
- they are treated in ways that create and reinforce an inevitable cycle of failure.

Noguera acknowledges the bad behaviors and subpar performances that some educators use to rationalize negative perceptions of black males or overly punitive, counterproductive attitudes toward them. At the same time, he wants educators to understand that their own decisions can worsen the behaviors and performances they lament. Pessimistic assumptions about black male students, he suggests, cause educators to say and do things that turn negative beliefs into self-fulfilling prophesies of bad outcomes.

The issues Noguera raises all relate to person-environment fit. The demeanors, apparent priorities, and academic profiles of black boys do not fit well, he says, with what teachers would prefer them to be. Teachers may respond in ways that are unsupportive and foster a downward spiral in teacher-student relationships and academic performance.

In this section, I examine evidence on how schools might contribute to the predicament, limiting success for BYMOC and undermining person-environment fit. The central concept is *bias*—by definition, the absence of neutrality. To determine whether bias against BYMOC exists in a particular context requires a conception of neutrality. Bias exists where one or more forms of neutrality have not been met. I begin by considering academic placements.

Bias in Academic Placements

When school officials justify academic placements, they usually cite criteria such as grades, test scores, or teacher assessments. A simple conception of neutrality in placements requires that the criteria, whatever they may be, are applied equally to all students. If students of a particular group are not selected despite meeting the formal criteria, a bias exists against that group. Call this type of neutrality *equal application of criteria*.

A second type of neutrality and bias focuses on the quality of the learning experience once selected. Neutrality is when the quality of the potential experience is equal between the available choices. By this criterion, a system may be biased, even if criteria are applied equally, if the experiences students can be selected into are of substantially different quality. Advocates, including parents and other stakeholders, sometimes have this in mind when considering special education placements, if they believe that special education classes are extremely poorly taught. The allegation would be that the system is biased against students placed in special education because of the inferior quality of the learning experience as opposed to unequal application of placement criteria. Call this type of neutrality *equal quality of options*.

Third, a system may be biased if the selection criteria are designed in ways that grant a particular group more or less access compared to equally qualified groups. Neutrality would be equal access among equally qualified people. Advocates sometimes have this in mind when they allege that selection criteria use irrelevant or unnecessary standards that cause disproportionate numbers of otherwise qualified people to be excluded. Call this type of neutrality *equal quality of access*.

This provides three different conceptions of neutrality and bias:

1. Neutrality is equal application of criteria; bias is unequal application of criteria.
2. Neutrality is equal quality of options; bias is unequal quality of options.
3. Neutrality is equal access for equally qualified people; bias is more or less access for a particular group among equally qualified groups. Here the problem is that *the criteria* are biased, not necessarily their application.

Tracking

Sociologist Adam Gamoran (2009) is an expert on academic tracking and has reviewed the relevant literature. He recognizes that, in theory, students in different academic tracks could be taught equally well. There is nothing inherent in tracking that says lower-skill students have to be taught less well.

Nonetheless, evidence indicates that students in lower level classes learn a bit less when not in classes with higher skill students. Conversely, students in higher level classes learn a bit more when not in classes with lower skill students. Hence, there appears to be bias of the second type, where high and low tracks are not of equal quality. Gamoran (2009, 4) writes, "The weight of the evidence indicates that tracking tends to exacerbate inequality with little or no overall contribution to productivity. This occurs because gains for higher achievers are offset by losses for lower achievers." An important but unanswered question is whether differences in learning outcomes might be due to differences in student behavior.

Concerning racial bias, Gamoran (2009, 5) writes, "Minority students whose test scores and socioeconomic backgrounds match those of whites are no less likely to be placed in high tracks." But wait! If equality among students with the same socioeconomic backgrounds is a criterion, there may be bias of unequal access since socioeconomic background should be irrelevant. When grades, scores, and other relevant criteria are equal, if students of any race from more advantaged families *are more likely* to be in in higher track classes, then there is a *social-class bias* in placements, and this can be a target for intervention.

Elementary Gifted and Talented

A recent study of underrepresentation in elementary school gifted programs in a large school district provides another example of bias (Card and Giuliano 2015). A policy change shifted student selection from an ad hoc screening system, in which only certain students were screened, to a universal screening program. Prior to the change, candidates were identified during first and second grades through an informal referral process; teachers could identify students or parents could nominate their own children. IQ tests were administered for free to those who were nominated or parents could have the testing done through outside vendors. The baseline minimum IQ score required for assignment to the gifted education program in third grade was 130, with a lowered target of 115 for English Language Learners and students who qualified for federally subsidized meals. But despite the lower score requirement, the number of English Language Learners, low-income students, and students of color in the gifted education program remained extremely low.

Once the universal screening policy was in place, the district administered an estimated 1,300 additional IQ tests. Each test took about three hours, and the cost of the process eventually led to its discontinuation. While it operated, however, it identified biases of unequal access in the informal referral process:

> A comparison of the newly identified gifted students to those who would have been identified even without screening shows that black and Latino students, free/reduced price lunch participants, English language learners, and girls were all systematically "under-referred" to the gifted program. Newly identified gifted students were more likely to come from schools in poor neighborhoods with relatively few gifted students, leading to a substantial equalization in gifted participation rates across schools. We hypothesize that parents and teachers often fail to recognize the potential of many poor and immigrant children with less than stellar achievement levels, accounting for their likelihood of being under-referred (Card and Giuliano 2015, 20).

Universal screening produced a 180 percent increase in the gifted assignment rate among all students who qualified for subsidized meals, a 130 percent increase among Latinos, and an 80 percent increase among blacks. When universal screening ended, reportedly for cost reasons, the previous patterns of underidentification—and bias—returned.

Special Education

It is not uncommon to hear that BYMOC are disproportionately overassigned to special education. Rarely, however, is a criterion for neutrality explicitly stated. There is simply an assumption that representation in special education should closely resemble representation in the population:

> These alarming statistics depicting significant overrepresentation of minorities identified for special education suggest that minority students are often misdiagnosed and inappropriately labeled, resulting in a denial of educational opportunities. …Although African Americans appear to bear the brunt of over-identification, the evidence indicates that all minority groups are vulnerable to discrimination in identification for special education. For example, Latinos, Native Americans, and Asian Pacific Americans are each overrepresented in mental retardation classifications at more than three times the rate of whites in at least one state [as of 2001] (Losen and Welner 2001, 412).

It is not unusual to hear that a child was assigned to special education because their teacher lacked behavior management skills or because of racist assumptions about ability. Certainly, this possibility must be taken very seriously when suspected. Still, the question remains whether BYMOC are routinely overassigned to special education and, importantly, *by what conception of neutrality*.

Jacob Higel, George Farkas, and Paul Morgan (2010) used ECLS-K data from fall of the kindergarten year to predict special education placements by spring of students' fifth-grade year. The strongest predictors of special education placement were the same kindergarten reading, math, and ATL attention and engagement measures used in the other ECLS-K studies cited earlier. The study found boys of all races more likely to receive special education placements than girls, and this difference could not be explained by the available measures. This gender bias is perhaps attributable to unmeasured behavior management issues or to an underassignment of girls.

Higel, Farkas, and Morgan did not find racial bias. When they controlled for kindergarten reading, math, and ATL attention and engagement measures, children of color were no more likely (and often less likely) than whites to be in special education.

Among children with equal kindergarten results in the ECLS-K, the authors write, "African American, Latino, and Asian students are placed less frequently than non-Latino whites. The under- or equal-placement rates for racial/ethnic minorities are partially explained by their concentration in high-minority schools" (Higel, Farkas, and Morgan 2010, 312). In other words, students of color tend to be more concentrated than whites in schools lacking the capacity to serve all students who qualify for special education placements. If there is a criteria-application racial bias in the system, the study would suggest that the bias is against whites.

The possibility of bias *in the quality* of special education services is a different issue. It concerns the second type of bias: equal quality of options. The existence of this form of bias has varied historically and geographically and has been a major concern of civil rights lawyers, especially in the Southern US (Losen and Welner 2001).

In addition, one can question the criteria by which children are selected for special education placements even if those criteria are applied equally. Another form of neutrality is the equal assessment or treatment of children with the same potential (R. Ferguson 2003). Accordingly, Roey Ahram, Edward Fergus, and Pedro Noguera (2011) question if the assessment measures typically used are culturally appropriate. They conducted case studies of special education disproportionality in suburban school districts and attribute the overrepresentation of black and Latino children in special education to two processes: "(1) assumptions of cultural deficit that result in unclear or misguided conceptualizations of disability and (2) subsequent labeling of students in special education through a pseudoscientific placement process" (Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera 2011, 2233).

Authors such as Ahram, Fergus, and Noguera who emphasize deficit thinking as an impediment to progress sometimes view the classification metrics that educators use as biased against students from less-advantaged backgrounds. These authors would probably not consider the findings by Higel, Farkas, and Morgan to be persuasive evidence of racial fairness. Their implicit conception of neutrality is different—perhaps a combination of types 2 and 3.

To universally applaud or condemn special education placements would be misguided. Unpublished work by this author using data for an entire state found wide variation in the performance of special education programs measured by achievement gains. High schools that mainstreamed 9th and 10th graders who had received special education services in middle school performed no better, on average,

with these students than schools that did not. There was no correlation between mainstreaming these students and achieving either outstanding or dismal gains. An in-depth case study comparing two schools that mainstreamed special education students found that the school that produced greater achievement gains was much more purposeful and well organized in meeting student needs (Packrone 2010). Whether in special education or regular classrooms, adequate capacity and relentless commitment by educators are key to BYMOC and other students achieving outstanding learning gains.

If we accept the validity of standard achievement measures as criteria for decisionmaking, some of the disproportionality in the examples above is the consequence of bias and some is the product of differences in preparation. The example of universal screening for third-grade gifted programs demonstrated a system clearly biased against identifying gifted students from less-advantaged backgrounds, including BYMOC. The ECLS-K study of special education placements indicated some within-race gender bias, but none against students of color. If anything, students of color were, on average, *underassigned* to special education in elementary school because they were *overrepresented* in schools where the need was greatest.

Stakeholders who suspect bias in special education placements should specifically define the conceptions of neutrality that they have in mind—equal application of criteria, equal quality of options, or equal quality of access. They should insist that authorities collect the data required to assess any deviation from those specific types of neutrality in their specific contexts, employ trusted and competent analysts, and then respond in carefully targeted ways that address their specific findings. The main question should be, "Given local circumstances, what arrangement will provide each child with the most effective instructional services and most effectively avoid person-environment fit predicaments?" There is no universal answer.

Bias in School Discipline

That BYMOC tend to be overrepresented among students disciplined in schools is an indication of poor person-environment fit. The student is suspected of violating the rules of the school environment and is disciplined as a result. The specific form of discipline may or may not reflect bias and may or may not improve person-environment fit.[31]

The simplest conception of bias against BYMOC in school discipline is their overrepresentation compared to the group's share of the relevant population. Columns D and E of table 3 show rates of disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions by race and gender using national data from the US

Office of Civil Rights. Among males and females alike, blacks and Native Americans stand out as the most overrepresented and Latinos are more represented than whites or Asians. Not shown in the table is that males overall are 69.8 percent of total out-of-school suspensions. How should we understand these race and gender patterns? Similar to the evidence on tracking and gifted and special education placement, the evidence is more nuanced than popular discourse would suggest. All three types of neutrality and bias defined above are relevant.

TABLE 3

US Public School Students with One or More Out-of-School Suspensions and Associated Disproportionality Relative to School-Aged Population Shares, 2012

	Racial/ethnic shares of US school-aged population	Male share of those suspended	Female share of those suspended	Approximate Disproportionality	
				Ratio B:A	Ratio C:A
	A	B	C	D	E
Asian-Pacific Islander	5%	1.2%	2.3%	0.25	0.46
Black	16%	35.4%	44.7%	2.21	2.79
Latino (any race)	24%	22.3%	21.2%	0.93	0.88
Native American	1%	1.4%	1.5%	1.39	1.49
White	51%	36.9%	29.1%	0.72	0.57

Sources: Racial/ethnic shares from Kena et al. (2015, 80) Male and female shares of suspended students from author's calculations using data from "2011–12 State and National Estimations," US Office for Civil Rights, http://ocrdata.ed.gov/StateNationalEstimations/Estimations_2011_12.

Equal application of criteria is violated when students from some groups are punished more severely than other groups for the same infractions. A lack of neutrality inside a classroom or school indicates bias *inside that classroom or school*. Richard Milner (2015) describes classrooms where black and white children were equally engaged in inappropriate behaviors but teachers singled out black students for reprimand.[32] Conversely, if there is neutrality toward groups inside each school, but schools serving student bodies of different racial and ethnic compositions apply different criteria for the same infractions, there is bias *in the system* rather than the individual schools. Below, I discuss evidence that disproportionate suspension rates for students of color following office disciplinary referrals may stem from bias in the system more than in the school. Systemically, there appear to be more supportive norms of behavior management in schools with fewer behavior problems.

Equal quality of options is violated when students who behave differently have access to different quality options for personal development. Bias of this type is almost *the definition* of discipline, since students who behave well are almost always treated more supportively than those who behave poorly. However, consider defining the quality of an option according to how well it matches the student's

developmental needs. A teacher might punish a misbehaving student with extra homework then stay after school to help them do it. Discipline can be considered neutral when disciplinary options for offending students are as well matched to their developmental needs as those available to *nonoffending* students. Bias exists when disciplinary options lack developmental benefits equal to those delivered to nonoffending students. I can say without fear of contradiction that this type of bias is pervasive.

Equal access for equally qualified people requires a definition of "equally qualified." Recall that this type of neutrality pertains to how the criteria for reward or punishment are defined—in other words, what they are—not whether they are equally applied. If BYMOC are punished more severely for infractions that are no more academically disruptive than those that white students commit, then there is bias of this third type: equally disruptive students are not equally punished. I have not found well-framed research on this type of bias, but it seems important to look for in schools.

An almost unavoidable weakness of the literature on disciplinary disproportionality is the lack of precise and detailed data on the nature of specific infractions. Available data pertain to categories of infraction that are inherently heterogeneous in the student behaviors they represent. Each documented infraction typically results from an office disciplinary referral (ODR) by a teacher, who indicates the category of the infraction. The literature contains several decades of documented racial, ethnic, and gender disparities in numbers of ODRs and associated punishments, with non-Asian BYMOC referred, suspended, or expelled more often than whites, Asians, and females.[33]

One study that uses some of the best data available is by Russell Skiba (2011), one of the most prolific researchers on this topic, and five colleagues using 2005–06 ODR data from 364 elementary and middle schools. All of the schools were participants in a program that required daily or weekly uploading of ODR data to an Internet-based reporting system. Black students, in particular, were between two and four times more likely than white students to be referred to the office for problem behavior. Latino students had fewer ODRs than whites at the elementary level but more at the middle school level. The study found that black and Latino students were more likely than white students to be suspended or expelled for infractions in the same ODR categories. However, it was unclear to what extent the disproportionality reflected within-school as opposed to between-school differences in disciplinary practices, and the study did not address differences by gender.

A second study by Skiba et al. (2014) distinguishes within- versus between-school sources of disproportionality in punishments by school administrators. It is the only study I am aware of that makes the distinction so clearly. The authors write, "[T]here has not yet been a study that has simultaneously considered the contributions by infraction type, student characteristics, and school

characteristics to out-of-school suspension and expulsion" (Skiba et al. 2014, 642).[34] The focus of the study is students who were referred to school administrators for misbehavior and received an in-school or out-of-school suspension or expulsion. The data cover 104,445 ODRs involving 43,320 students in 730 schools in a Midwestern state. The majority (52.3 percent) of students received in-school suspensions; 45.6 percent were given out-of-school suspensions and 2.1 percent were expelled. Blacks and whites are the largest racial groups in the state and the only ones covered in the study.

Controlling for the category of infraction, but not yet for school-level factors such as the poverty rate or the racial composition, the authors found that males (irrespective of race) were about 20 percent more likely than females to receive out-of-school instead of in-school suspensions and no more likely to be expelled. They found at the individual level that students who qualify for subsidized meals were about 5 percent more likely to receive out-of-school suspensions than others but no more likely to be expelled. Their racial analysis found the odds of being suspended to be about 25 percent higher for blacks than for whites, though both groups were equally likely to be expelled. Again, this finding blends within- and between-school differences.

When the authors added controls for school-level factors, the disparity in the likelihood of receiving out-of-school instead of in-school suspensions completely disappeared. The two statistically significant predictors of suspension were "percentage black enrollment" and "percentage passing math and English." Once results were controlled for percentage of black enrollment and math and English passing rates, neither average teacher experience, the poverty rate (i.e., eligibility for federally subsidized meals), nor the principal's perspective on student exclusion were statistically significant at conventional levels for predicting between-school suspension differences.[35] The most important between-school findings were for suspensions since fewer than 3 percent of ODRs resulted in expulsion.[36]

These findings show that black and white students attending the same school and referred for the same category of infraction were, on average, likely to receive similar discipline. The study also shows that the black-white differences in odds of in-school versus out-of-school suspension (identified before controlling for school-level factors) were the result of between-school rather than within-school differences in administrative decisionmaking.

Recall from the Tripod analysis earlier that a classroom's racial composition and percentage of lower achievers were important predictors of responses to the survey item "*Students behave so badly in our class that it slows down our* learning." This, along with the findings from Skiba et. al. (2014), suggests that administrators are more likely to favor out-of-school over in-school suspensions in schools that pose more disciplinary challenges.

Because differences are more between-school than within-school, the findings do not generally support the idea that black-white disproportionality in out-of-school suspensions is mainly the result of administrative stereotypes against black males or implicit bias. There would have to be an implausible pattern of bias in administrative assignments—with administrators who are more biased against black males more likely to be assigned to schools with higher percentages of black males—for the latter to be true. Instead, black-white disproportionality in administrative discipline appears to result from the concentration of black students in schools and communities that generate more ODRs and associated institutional stresses.[37] For administrators feeling overwhelmed, out-of-school suspensions may be an expedient response to their own predicament.

Even so, experts on school discipline have concluded that out-of-school suspensions are not the best way of managing misbehavior. School districts across the nation, including Denver, Chicago, and Baltimore, have revised their codes of conduct to reduce the number of suspensions and expulsions. They have increased their emphasis on helping teachers elicit positive student behaviors while encouraging more supportive responses to misbehavior. Daniel Losen's (2015) edited volume, *Closing the School Discipline Gap: Equitable Remedies for Excessive Exclusion* provides a number of relevant examples. See the summary discussion later in this paper of what the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Ohio did to achieve impressive results.

Okonofua's "Black Escalation Effect"

Some aspects of person-environment fit can accrue from the reputation of the group to which one belongs. Evidence indicates that stereotypes and associated stigmas reduce the probability of BYMOC receiving the benefit of the doubt from teachers and administrators, causing even innocent students to be suspected and accused (and oftentimes alienated) more than Asians, whites, and females. Jason Okonofua, Greg Walton, and Jennifer Eberhardt (2015) have done conceptual and empirical work where the ideas and findings are consistent with such a scenario. The authors write, "Integrating research on stereotyping and on stigma, we theorize that bias and apprehension about bias can build on one another in school settings in a vicious cycle that undermines teacher-student relationships over time and exacerbates inequality. ...This approach is more comprehensive than accounts that consider the predicaments of teachers or students but not the two in tandem" (Okonofua, Walton, and Eberhardt 2015).

Table 4 is reproduced from one of their papers and summarizes the joint predicament. Negative attitudes of both teachers and students can lead to a downward spiral of worsening behavior.

TABLE 4

Schematic Model of the Psychological Predicaments Faced by Teachers and by Racially Stigmatized Students

	Teachers	Racially stigmatized students
Primary goal	To teach and inspire.	To learn and develop.
Stereotypes	Racially stigmatized students might be troublemakers.	Teachers might be biased against students like me.
Worries	These students could prevent me from fulfilling my teaching goals.	I might not belong; I might be treated unfairly.
Construal/ attributions	Misbehavior among racially stigmatized students is enduring and problematic and undermines my teaching goals.	Disciplinary action from teachers is evidence that I don't belong and/or that my teacher is unfair and undermines my learning goals.
Behavior	More frequent and more severe disciplinary action against racially stigmatized students	More frequent and more severe misbehavior.

Source: Reproduced from Okonofua, Walton, and Eberhardt (2015, 9).

As a partial test of their theory, Okonofua and Eberhart (2015) conducted a randomized experiment in which teachers were shown multiple students, given examples of misbehavior, and asked how troubled they would feel by the particular behavior. Student race was manipulated by assigning some students stereotypically black names. The results showed no statistically significant difference in teacher responses to blacks and whites for the first infraction. However, the teachers' grew more concerned for black students than for whites on the second infraction by a statistically significant margin. Furthermore, on the second infraction, teachers were more likely to label the hypothetical black student a troublemaker and inclined to propose more severe discipline. After the second infraction, teachers were more likely to believe that the black student's behavior was part of a pattern and more likely by a statistically significant margin to imagine a future need to suspend the black student.

If teachers perceive their environment as one in which blacks are more likely than whites to pose behavioral problems, then these findings should not be surprising. However, Okonofua and his colleagues help us understand that race and gender differences in student behavior and harsher punishments result from *both teacher and student behaviors* in the context of well-established stereotypes. The stereotypes affect what the authors call *the black escalation effect*, in which stereotyped students are not given the benefit of the doubt for a second or subsequent infraction. Although framed as an individual-level phenomenon (e.g., "John has always been a problem") it appears

with greater likelihood and frequency among stigmatized students. Note that this study concerned hypothetical students and not students the teachers actually knew. The results remind us of the Tripod findings regarding mutual disrespect between BYMOC and teachers in the hallways.

In a third paper, Okonofua, David Paunesku, and Walton (2015) conducted two laboratory experiments and a field test to explore whether their insights could lead to behavior change. The laboratory experiments tested whether teachers could be induced to adopt more empathetic attitudes toward students and whether empathetic responses from teachers could induce greater respect and better behavior from students. The experiments confirmed that both were possible.

The authors then conducted a field experiment with math teachers from five middle schools who, in total, taught 1,580 students (Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton 2015). Teachers were randomly assigned to either the treatment group or control group. The treatment group intervention comprised one 45-minute and one 25-minute online module that the teachers completed. The authors describe the modules as follows: "The materials focused on difficult interactions with students, especially disciplinary encounters, and how teachers can make these interactions productive. The ideas presented were described as common but sometimes neglected wisdom about teaching. Teachers were told that the purpose of the exercise was to collect experienced teachers' perspectives on best practices for interacting with students" (Okonofua, Paunesku, and Walton 2015, 6–7). Teachers were not explicitly told what to do in their classrooms, but the treatment group was expected to adjust their approach as a result of completing the online modules. The effect would be measured by later differences in behavior problems in treatment group classrooms versus control classrooms. The students were 17 percent Asian, 2 percent black, 54 percent Latino, 7 percent white, and 20 percent other or unknown.

The intervention cut suspension rates in half: the schoolwide rate for the year was 9.8 percent in control group classrooms and 4.6 percent in treatment group classrooms. For key subgroups, rates were 14.6 percent versus 8.4 percent for boys; 12.3 percent versus 6.3 percent for blacks and Latinos; and 51.2 percent versus 29.4 percent for students who had previously been suspended! Teachers who received the intervention appeared to interact with students of all backgrounds in ways that avoided escalation.

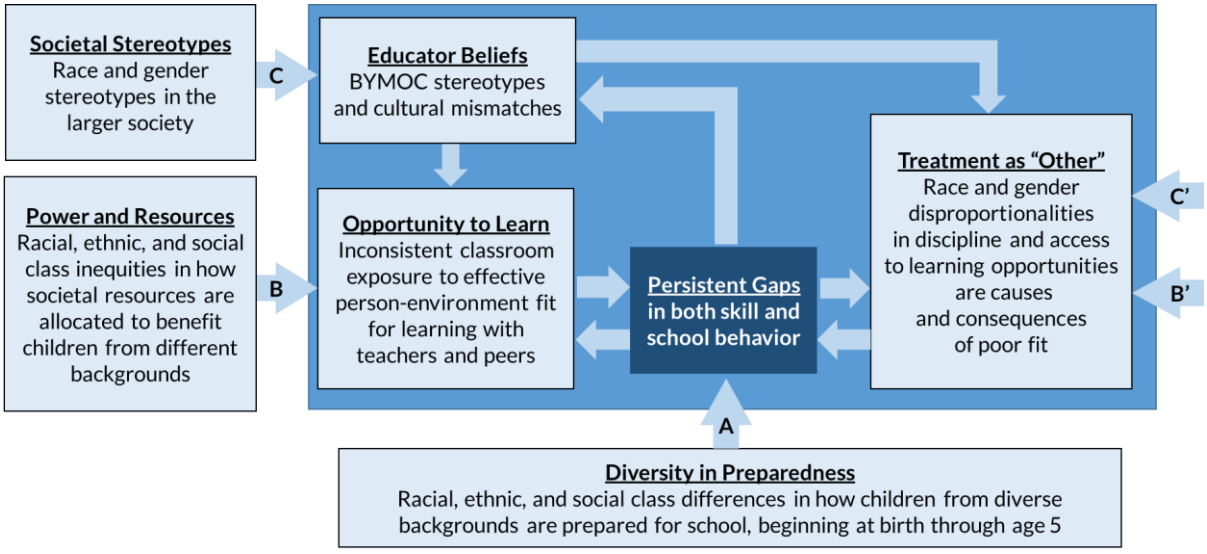
There was also an effect on how students perceived teachers. Students in the control group who had been previously suspended were less likely than their classmates to perceive their teacher as respectful and felt less respect for the teacher. No such disparity was found for students in the treatment group.[38] Hence, person-environment fit improved for students in treatment classrooms who had previously been suspended.

The Person-Environment Fit Predicament

To summarize, we can identify three specific points of departure for pathways through which society generates skill and behavior gaps for BYMOC. I label them *Diversity in Preparedness*, *Power and Resources*, and *Societal Stereotypes*. Each contributes to the *Person-Environment-Fit Predicament* in figure 20.

FIGURE 20

The Person-Environment Fit Predicament



The first point of departure into the predicament is represented by the arrow labeled "A" connected to the box labeled "Diversity in Preparedness." We have discussed that BYMOC often arrive at kindergarten with skills and behaviors that educators are not well-prepared to handle. From the first day of school, this problem of person-environment fit can place some BYMOC at a disadvantage compared to their peers and set the predicament cycle in motion.

The second pathway into the predicament is through disparities in Power and Resources, represented by arrows "B" and "B'." Power and resources play key roles in determining which children—and whose children—are or are not effectively targeted for high-quality educational experiences. The paper asked earlier whether BYMOC have access to the same quality of instruction that white males receive. Based on students' own perspectives, I have not found significant differences in how students

of different racial backgrounds within the same classroom perceive teaching as measured by the Tripod 7Cs. However, I do find differences between classrooms. It appears that allowing concentrated disadvantage through racial segregation—with the resulting classroom-management challenges—is the primary way that power and resources affect the person-environment fit predicament in upper elementary schools. Consequently, policy should strive to reduce segregation. While fighting that uphill battle, policymakers and community stakeholders must not wait to support educators, parents, and students to perform better and achieve more under still-segregated conditions.

The story is similar at the secondary level. Racial differences in how students in the same classroom perceive the quality of instruction are minimal, but having higher percentages of students of color predicts worse behavior and less-effective classroom management. There are small negative effects along multiple teaching dimensions predicted by higher percentages of students of color, but the effect on classroom management is typically four times as large as the effect on any other. Also at the secondary level, students at schools with higher percentages of students of color feel less safe and treat one another with less respect.

Clearly, such conditions are not the direct result of skin color. Instead, they result from structural and cultural conditions correlated with race and poverty and how schools as institutions interact with race and poverty and cope under difficult circumstances. Families whose children attend racially segregated schools have less of the power and fewer of the resources that enable other families to send their children to better schools. Similarly, as Amanda Lewis and John Diamond (2015) documented in their book, *Despite the Best Intentions*, power and resource disparities between parents of color and white parents can diminish access to high-quality instruction and affect person-environment fit for BYMOC compared to white students even inside the same highly resourced school.

The third pathway into the predicament is through societal stereotypes, represented by arrows "C" and "C'." Stereotypes concern the expectations that others have for BYMOC as well as what BYMOC believe about their own social or racial/ethnic group. They may be grounded in patterns of actual observed behaviors, but they do not reflect an inevitable reality and are not indicators of group-level abilities, values, or aspirations. The existence of stereotypes in the broader society contributes to the isolation of different racial, ethnic, and social class groups from one another. When they are brought together, the lack of mutual familiarity contributes to various forms of cultural incompetence. The teacher and student beliefs and behaviors discussed in the context of the Okonofua black escalation effect were driven by preconceptions that teachers and BYMOC had of one another. The same is true regarding the disrespect with which teachers and BYMOC often treat one another in secondary school hallways.

Researchers who emphasize societal stereotypes as factors affecting BYMOC are very sensitive to the importance of teacher and student preconceptions, subjective experiences, and emotions as determinants of the ways that they interact. Central concerns include subtle forms of disrespect and microaggressions that can damage interracial dynamics and undermine school-based collaboration as well as how racial stereotypes distort teaching behaviors. This perspective emphasizes the need for teachers to learn about distinct features of community context and adapt professional practices to fit.

Stereotypes cause mistaken assumptions. Milner (2015) described the cultural mismatch he observed when a teacher expressed his disappointment to four Latino students for their seeming lack of effort in his class. The teacher then learned that one student was still learning English and often did not understand him and that another was frequently tired because difficult circumstances at home prevented him from sleeping. Milner wants teachers to "understand and develop responsiveness to students' experiences, and to use them as guides to create a more equitable curriculum" (Milner 2015, 77). He believes that focusing "on poverty and race and their intersected nature has promise rather than concentrating exclusively on outcomes—especially test scores—that are separated from the material realities of those living in poverty..." (Milner 2015, 175). In the latter excerpt, he is concerned with power and resources as much as he is with stereotypes.

My reading of the evidence is that diversity in preparedness and power and resources are stronger sources of continuing disparities in educational outcomes for BYMOC than societal stereotypes. If race/gender stereotypes and cultural mismatches in the classroom are the norm for BYMOC, then the quantitative evidence from thousands of classrooms should show more within-classroom differences between BYMOC and their peers in response to items such as "*My teacher in this class makes me feel that s/he really cares about me.*" Instead, BYMOC tend to agree with their classmates in how they rate their teachers. The racially charged dynamics of the Okonofua black escalation effect, while real, do not appear to *dominate* the everyday functioning of classrooms. The evidence in this paper indicates that the greatest inequities in teaching and learning are not experienced between students in the same classrooms. Rather, they are between classrooms and often between schools. On average, BYMOC have much less access than white males to orderly, on-task classrooms.

BYMOC who fail to avoid or escape the person-environment fit predicament may be trapped in a self-reinforcing cycle of underachievement and self-defeating behavior. Their skills and behaviors may seem to confirm negative stereotypes and justify disciplinary decisions that treat them as the "other" rather than empathetically as valued members of the community.

But this is not a story of individuals. Nor is it solely a story about stereotyping of the type that psychologists sometimes emphasize, though stereotyping is important. Instead, the story entails an intricate web of conditions involving every aspect of the social ecologies in which young people grow and develop: their homes, classrooms, and peer groups; the relations that connect these settings to one another and often present BYMOC with conflicting incentives and expectations; the places where adults make key decisions affecting how BYMOC will be treated; and the complex belief systems within which all of these social transactions take place. We have a systemic person-environment fit predicament affecting BYMOC all over the nation. Breaking it requires systemic solutions in the context of a movement fueled by a sense of urgency and possibility. Improvements that the movement brings about may begin as effective programs whose practices then spread to infuse the normal routines of schooling.

How Schools Improve for Males of Color

Programs with the potential to help unravel the predicament, improve person-environment fit, and bolster educational outcomes for BYMOC, including a number that have been validated by high-quality experimental evaluations, are not hard to identify.

- The My Teaching Partner program provides one-on-one coaching to teachers. Randomized experiments have shown the program can produce achievement gains (Allen et al. 2011) and reduce racial disparities in office referrals for misbehavior (Gregory et al. 2015). My Teaching Partner can be targeted to high-poverty schools where BYMOC are heavily represented.
- The Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies program shows strong results improving both behavior and achievement in elementary schools (Conduct Problems Prevention Research Group 2010; Domitrovich, Cortes, and Greenberg 2007). See the section "Evidence from a Districtwide Behavior-Change Strategy" for an example of a strategy in Cleveland, Ohio, where the program played an important role.
- Programming in Chicago public schools that focused on reducing ninth-grade failure rates helped BYMOC disproportionately (Roderick 2014 et al.).
- A program that combined counseling and tutoring to low-achieving inner-city BYMOC resulted in higher math scores (Cook et al. 2014).
- New research on the Moving to Opportunity program that moved families from high- to low-poverty neighborhoods shows the program improved later college attendance and earnings compared to a randomly selected group of families that did not move (but only if the move was during the preteen years).[39]
- New York City's Small Schools of Choice Initiative has cut drop-out rates and raised scores among students, including BYMOC, compared to other schools in the system.[40]

When researchers look systematically at effective schools, classrooms, and programs such as these, they find relentless, high-quality implementation of a core set of common principles backed by the skills and resources to enable implementation.

Schools most effective at raising achievement levels and narrowing gaps have leaders with clear ideas about what high-quality instruction entails. Typically, they do not import a school-improvement model developed elsewhere. Instead, administrators and teacher leaders are students of the profession. They study available research and collaborate with colleagues around well-defined priorities for professional improvement. They work hard to master and apply core principles of effective teaching that are embedded in the Tripod 7Cs or other teaching frameworks. In addition, they approach quality teaching as a moral obligation to each student. Most do not use the language of person-environment fit, but personalization in which adults are warm yet demanding tends to be the norm. Educator, organizational, and school-community preparation—three of the criteria stipulated at the beginning of this paper—are nonnegotiable norms. Developing whole systems of such schools should be our goal, but doing so will require more than an effective program. It will require norms of teacher and administrator selection, training, and support focused on building a more robust teaching profession as well as the resources to make these things possible.

Some Case Studies and their Commonalities

In a variety of context-specific ways, BYMOC in effective programs and classrooms experience personalized, respectful, culturally sensitive, and intensive time-on-task learning opportunities. These opportunities have well-defined developmental goals and a focus on continuous, data-informed improvement. To be most effective at producing targeted developmental outcomes, professionals in effective learning contexts are willing and able to competently adapt their models and procedures to fit students' needs.

To achieve regular person-environment fit in a whole school, school-level structures and routines must provide teachers with preparation, feedback, and administrative supports to meet students' academic (and sometimes personal) needs. Key elements of organizational structure and procedure can be systematically identified through case-study analyses.

The Education Innovation Laboratory at Harvard University transfers lessons from the best charter schools into regular public schools. This has had strong effects on math scores and worthwhile effects on reading scores in both experimental and quasi-experimental analyses (Fryer 2014). Initially, researchers studied what makes some charter schools more effective than others in order to distill lessons for public schools. Faculty director Roland Fryer and his team conducted extensive on-site observations and quantitatively coded what they saw. Using statistical methods, they then distilled

features of schools producing higher test score gains. They identified five elements that predicted score gains and four that did not. The elements that *did not* distinguish which charter schools did best were class size, per-pupil expenditure, teachers with certifications, and teachers with master's degrees. The things that *did* predict success were

- active and purposeful feedback from administrators to teachers;
- use of data from regular student assessments to drive instructional decisionmaking;
- tutoring for all students and high-dosage tutoring for those who need it;
- extended time on task, including more time in school; and
- an explicit emphasis on goals, with frequently-communicated high expectations for achieving them (Fryer 2012).

Translating this to regular schools was Fryer's next step, and his efforts have produced impressive results. However, they have required intensive involvement by him or his agents in places adopting the approach. In addition, teacher and administrator quality has been improved partly through turnover rather than broad improvement with the staff already in place.[41] Virtually all school-improvement models and programs tend to be labor intensive, and the scarcest resource is the leadership needed to achieve effective implementation.

The case studies of gap-narrowing school improvement with which I am most familiar were instances where leadership's primary focus was on improving instruction (R. Ferguson et al. 2010). Initially, political energy inside schools focused on establishing serving *every* child as a nonnegotiable goal. Race was sometimes, but not always, an explicit topic of discussion since these were majority nonwhite schools. The second-year principal at Robert A. Taft High School in Cincinnati, Ohio, told his teachers not to come back after lunch if they were not on board:

> On opening day of the second year, Mr. Smith asked teachers: "Aren't you tired of teaching at the lowest-performing school in the state?" And they replied, "Yeah, sure we are tired of teaching at the lowest-performing school in the state." In response, Mr. Smith said, "Okay, it's time for lunch, and anyone who does not want to be part of who we are, don't return after lunch—I'll find new teachers" (R. Ferguson et al. 2010, 42)

They all returned. Within five years, a school where 95 percent of students were black and 68 percent qualified for free and reduced-price meals was beating the state average *for whites* in math, reading, and science.

Leaders at highly effective public schools assert a moral imperative to teach well. Teachers with low expectations are shown ways to teach "as if" their expectations were higher. At Brockton High School in Massachusetts, teachers are required to receive feedback on their grading. A committee of teachers and administrators decided more than a decade ago that teachers in every subject—including noncore subjects such as gym, art, and health—would assign academic essays. Teachers submit the graded essays to supervisors and are evaluated on how well the feedback they provide to their students aligns with the school's rubric for student writing. The supervisors in turn receive feedback from the associate principal.

The rubric was designed by teachers at the school and has been revised several times since 2002. As the largest school in Massachusetts, with over 4,000 students, three-quarters of whom qualify for subsidized meals and roughly the same percentage are students of color, Brockton consistently achieves 8th-to-10th-grade score gains in English Language Arts that rank among the best in the state and also improved in math gains. Leaders testify that the largest increases in teacher expectations came though seeing-is-believing experiences *after* students actually improved. The doubting and resistant teachers were like the patient who does not believe the medicine will help but takes it anyway and is pleasantly surprised when they get well.

Brockton High improved with very little teacher turnover. In the years that I studied their data—2006 through 2008—both black and Latino males cut between half and two-thirds of the gap in English Language Arts scores—actual scores, not just proficient rates—between themselves and Massachusetts white males from 8th grade to 10th grade. Certainly, there are high-gain schools like this in every state—regular public schools that can be models for others. It takes ongoing energy. Brockton remains above average, but has slipped below the top category and is currently working to regain its exemplary position in the achievement gain ranking.

Just as Brockton became outstanding in English Language Arts, Tech Boston Academy learned to be outstanding in math (and also does well in English Language Arts). Tech Boston Academy's enrollment is 90 percent students of color, almost all of whom qualify for free and reduced-price lunches. Year after year, Tech Boston Academy takes BYMOC who rank far below the state average as 8th graders and raises them to near or even above the state average for whites as 10th graders. During a recent two-year period, black and Latino males rose from -0.89 and -0.36 standard deviations, respectively, below the state average for whites as 8th graders to -0.03 standard deviations below whites (blacks) and +0.37 above whites (Latinos) as 10th graders. Case studies of the schools I have cited show that their methods have much in common with what Fryer and his colleagues found when they studied successful

charter schools, and with what the New York City Small Schools of Choice and other effective schools do to achieve strong results.

In a recent report, my colleagues and I used Tripod data to study statistically the relationship of teaching to student social-emotional skills, success mindsets, and personal agency. The relationship of the same teaching measures to test score gains had been established in other research (Raudenbush and Jean 2014; Kane, McCaffrey, and Staiger 2010). The patterns were quite nuanced. I distilled 10 implications for teaching built around the 7Cs components discussed earlier. Here, I have substituted "BYMOC" for the word "student."

1. **Care:** Be attentive and sensitive but avoid coddling BYMOC in ways that hold them to lower standards for effort and performance.
2. **Confer:** Encourage and respect the perspectives of BYMOC but avoid losing focus on key instructional goals.
3. **Captivate:** Strive to make lessons stimulating and relevant. If some BYMOC seem unresponsive, seek ways to improve, but also remember that some actively hide their interest and effort.
4. **Clarify with lucid explanations:** Strive to develop clearer explanations, especially for the material that BYMOC find most difficult.
5. **Clarify by responding to confusion:** Take regular steps to detect and respond to confusion in class, but strike a balance between simply giving BYMOC the answers when they struggle versus pressing them to take responsibility for their own learning.
6. **Clarify with instructive feedback:** Give instructive feedback in ways that provide scaffolding for BYMOC to solve their own problems.
7. **Consolidate:** Regularly summarize lessons to remind BYMOC what they have learned and help them encode understanding in memory.
8. **Challenge by requiring rigor:** Press BYMOC to think deeply instead of superficially about their lessons. Set and enforce learning goals that require BYMOC to use reasoning and exercise agency in solving problems.
9. **Challenge by requiring persistence:** Consistently require BYMOC to keep trying and searching for ways to succeed even when work is difficult.
10. **Classroom Management:** Strive to achieve respectful, orderly, on task-behavior by BYMOC through teaching that clarifies, captivates, and challenges rather than intimidation or coercion.

These are basic propositions about effective teaching, but relentless administrator and teacher leadership is required to establish them firmly—and apply them to ALL students—in schools or school systems.

Evidence from a Districtwide Behavior-Change Strategy

In 2008, the Cleveland Metropolitan School District in Ohio adopted an unusually well-conceived and ambitious strategy: a multipronged approach designed to affect both student and teacher behaviors. As it was implemented, the school and the district used data to track key indicators of progress and inform decisions on midcourse corrections. According to a report from the American Institutes for Research, three essential components of the strategy were

1. an empirically validated social and emotional learning program that helps students in elementary grades to understand, regulate, and express emotions (*Promoting Alternative Thinking Strategies*, or *PATHS*);
2. *student support teams*, a widely used planning model for students who exhibit early warning signs (including those related to attendance and behavior) with a referral process to respond to student needs in a timely, coordinated, and effective manner; and
3. *planning centers*, which replaced punitive in-school suspension with a learner-centered approach to discipline that focuses on student needs and helps students learn self-discipline, and aligns with the student support teams and CMSD's focus on social and emotional learning (Osher et al. 2013).

The report identified a number of impressive results from the fall of 2008 through the spring of 2011. Among them, the average number of suspendable behavioral incidents per school fell from 233.1 to 132.4. This included reductions from 131.8 to 73.9 incidents of disobedient or disruptive behavior, from 54.5 to 36.4 incidents of fighting or violent behavior, from 12.8 to 5.6 incidents of harassment or intimidation, and from 13.3 to 5.8 incidents of serious bodily harm. During this period, out-of-school suspensions declined by 58 percent. The available data did not allow the authors to determine whether BYMOC were equally benefitted.

The PATHS, student support teams, and planning centers were all ways of increasing person-environment fit for students at risk of behaving badly.

Helping BYMOC Stay on Track after High School

Preparing to stay on track through the next phase of development is an ongoing task in a person-environment fit strategy. For adolescents, preparing well for the future requires more than simply avoiding perils and mastering academic skills. It also requires identifying future options for education and career, learning about the strategies necessary to pursue those options, the availability of resources to implement those strategies, and the rewards to be expected from making the effort. In short: information about options, strategies, resources, and rewards.

BYMOC from less-advantaged backgrounds have less access to effective counseling and tend to be isolated from the information provided by good counselors. In that sense, the system is biased. The system would be neutral if children and youth from all backgrounds had access to the same amount and quality of information to make strategic life decisions and the same amount of support for implementing those decisions. Here, I briefly cite a few examples where measures to correct such biases have made a positive difference.

Many families are unaware of how to secure financial aid for college, and if they are aware, they may be intimidated by or poorly prepared to engage in the process. An experiment involving H&R Block tax professionals helping low- to moderate-income families complete the Free Application for Federal Student Aid showed that simply giving families information did not improve application rates (Bettinger et al. 2009). However, information along with help completing the forms led more students to submit the aid application and enroll in college the following fall. Other researchers using experimental methods have found similar effects from providing modest amounts of information and support (Carrell and Sacerdote 2013).

Another issue is that young people from less-advantaged backgrounds are often unprepared socially and psychologically for the college and university experience and often feel out of place socially. Students that feel this way may hold back from seeking support and instead choose to drop out. Social-psychological interventions using randomized experiments at the time of transition into college have proven to be effective at improving both performance and persistence. These college-belonging interventions help students anticipate feeling out of place and accept the feeling is normal, increasing the likelihood they will persist and succeed (Yeager and Walton 2011).

The college-belonging experiments are one of many social psychological experiments in which small bits of information, often very subtly conveyed, enhance performance for students of color. A review of these interventions is beyond the scope of this paper. However, David Yeager and Greg Walton are

leaders among the researchers conducting such experiments. They explain the essential mechanisms by which the interventions have their effect as follows:

> But when promoting forces are adequate...student success may be held back instead by restraining forces, such as worries about ability or negative stereotypes. In these cases...one can remove forces that restrain their learning, allowing students to take greater advantage of learning opportunities. As a consequence, even a seemingly small intervention but one that removes a critical barrier to learning [the restraining force] can produce substantial effects on academic outcomes (Yeager and Walton 2011, 275).

By "promoting forces," they mean forces that enable success, such as adequate curriculum, competent teachers, and a positive motivation to learn.

Through words and actions, teachers and other adults can either impose or remove mindset barriers to performance that restrain learning.[42] Adults need training to say and do the things that remove such barriers. Currently, however, it is unclear which modes of training for teachers and other adults are effective and scalable.

Finally, there is a bias in how we talk to youth about possibilities after high school. Consider a definition of neutrality in which students are encouraged and allowed to pursue the future options that best fit their skills and interests. Historically, black and brown children were sometimes actively discouraged from attending four-year colleges. Partly in response, the four-year college degree is sometimes the only postsecondary option emphasized even for struggling students of color. Indeed, some educators fear that advocating anything else invites accusations of racism or elitism. However, we know that a four-year college degree is a great fit for many but a *not-gonna-happen* prospect for others. Most of us have young people in our own extended families for whom we know a four-year college is not a good fit. We need to familiarize these young people with the many careers that do not require a four-year degree but nonetheless constitute worthy aspirations (Spaulding et al. 2015).

Given our centuries-long racial history of poor advice, this is not a simple matter. Nonetheless, both upward and downward bias in current systems for information and assistance is a problem remaining to be solved. BYMOC in their late teens and early twenties find themselves disproportionately disconnected from both school and work, unprepared for the options they desire, and lacking positive contexts for person-environment fit.

Conclusion: Aiming Higher with Capacity and Will

There are many programs and school-improvement approaches that, if implemented well, can improve educational outcomes for BYMOC. This paper has listed and briefly described some of them. It has also identified common principles among the most effective approaches: clear goals embedded in professional development and ongoing feedback to teachers on their performance, personalization and targeted supports for students, data-based decisionmaking, high standards, and relentless commitment to continuous improvement. These principles can form the basis on which additional programs and approaches can be designed. I submit that the reason such programs and approaches are not more common is the lack of capacity to mount them effectively and the lack of collective will or ability to develop that capacity. Impediments to broad-based improvement can be classified four ways:

- **Political:** Group interests by race, ethnicity, and socioeconomic status affect resource allocation and residential patterns, which in turn foster differential access to high-quality learning environments. Inside schools, group interests can affect which children's needs are treated as priorities and which are not.
- **Sociological:** Well-established traditions provide social reinforcement for parenting, caregiving, teaching, and school management practices that have been handed down over generations but may need to be updated.
- **Psychological:** Identity-related beliefs and dispositions affect teaching and learning behaviors. Among students, the need for belonging (and sometimes physical safety) compels compliance with destructive peer pressures. Among adults, the need for acceptance, influence, and perceived competence in the eyes of colleagues leads to complicity in norms and practices that many know are ill-advised.
- **Economic:** Financial resources, educator skills, and organizational capacities are key factors affecting how fairly and effectively schools affect learning for BYMOC and others.

Prescriptions in this paper concerning particular programs as well as the general idea of improving person-environment fit must be supported by both public- and private-sector resources and implemented through a variety of programmatic interventions and institutional reforms. For most, there will be no way around *doing the politics*. At the same time, as we do the politics, let us be certain

that the reforms we seek are well suited to achieving the outcomes we value. This paper sometimes affirms and other times challenges conventional wisdom among those of us who advocate.

When Milner (2015) writes about "focusing on poverty and race and their intersected nature" and "the ways that racism prevents us from addressing the causes of underachievement," he is echoing the many scholars and journalists who have documented the poor conditions of high-poverty, racially segregated schools and declared the injustice of allowing such conditions to persist. Even in racially integrated schools and districts, addressing the particular needs of BYMOC and other less-advantaged students can spark opposition. Noguera (2008) and Lewis and Diamond (2015) have written about upper-middle income, racially integrated schools and the difficulty of making students of color and their academic needs true priorities in the presence of vested interests that favor the status quo.

In the end, building capacity and taking initiative in any community to help males of color excel requires that stakeholders take responsibility. In many cases, vested interests will perceive change as threatening, at which point organized stakeholders must *do the politics*—seeking and securing sufficient public- and private-sector commitments, including funding, to do the necessary work. While school expenditures were not an indicator of success in the charter schools Fryer studied, professional development supports and supplemental services needed to improve BYMOC outcomes do cost money.[43] However, money is not enough. Collective will, effective leadership, and high-quality management are required to guide how funds are used. There is no doubt existing funds could be used more effectively.

Simply providing more formal and informal supports to parents and other caregivers to prevent males of color from falling behind by age 2 seems likely to make an important difference. As discussed, several efforts around the nation have launched with just this purpose and, while not yet proven effective, they seem promising.

Appendix A. Some Key Patterns in National Data

National summary statistics for black-white and Latino-white achievement gaps are issued by the Nation's Report Card (Vanneman, Hamilton, and Anderson 2009; Hemphill and Vanneman 2011). They show girls and boys within each racial group doing equally well in fourth- and eighth-grade math but not reading, where a gender gap exists with girls ahead of boys. There are also racial gaps. Within each gender, whites score better than Latinos, who in turn score better than blacks.

Some good news is that scores in both reading and math have risen. For all racial groups and both fourth and eighth grades, boys in 2009 approached or slightly exceeded the reading level that girls achieved in 1990. Math scores in 2009 for black and Latino fourth graders (but not eighth graders) exceeded where whites were in 1990. Any enthusiasm about progress for fourth and eighth graders is a bit dampened, however, by the little progress made among 17-year-olds since 1990 (in the National Assessment of Educational Progress Long-Term Trend Assessment) (NCES 2013). Flat trends since 1990 followed impressive progress for black and Latino 17-year-olds compared to whites during the 1970s and 1980s (R. Ferguson 2001). The best recent news is that, after a long period of stagnation, high school graduation rates have risen for black, Latino, and white males and females among children born after 1980 (Murnane 2013).

The most sobering evidence comes from international comparisons. The Program on International Student Assessment is managed by the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development. It issues reading and math assessments to representative samples of 15-year-olds in most of the world's developed economies.[44] White and Asian Americans score at the top of the list in reading. If US Asians were a nation, they would rank first in the world; whites would rank fourth, behind Korea and Finland. In math problem-solving, however, US whites and Asians rank only 15th and 17th, respectively. The results are more disappointing for black and Latino Americans. In math, Latinos rank 30th and blacks rank 31st, just ahead of Turkey and Mexico. In reading, Latinos rank 33rd and blacks rank 36th. Chile and Turkey rank 34th and 35th, respectively, and Mexico ranks 37th.

A report from the Social Science Research Council shows that people of color were overrepresented in 2013 among young men and women disconnected from both work and school. Among 16- to 24-year-olds, those who were disconnected included 21.6 percent of blacks in the age group, 20.3 percent of Native Americans, 16.3 percent of Latinos, 11.3 percent of whites, and 7.9

percent of Asians (Lewis and Burd-Sharps 2015). In another report, the Congressional Research Service presented data by gender for blacks, Latinos, and whites in 2014 (Fernandes-Alcantara 2015). It shows that among black, Latino, and white young adults who are not yet parents, males are more disconnected than females and black males the most disconnected of all.[45] Employment discrimination remains one reason that young people of color have fewer opportunities (Bertrand and Mullainathan 2004), but skill gaps remain another.[46]

Notes

1. Most children in the US age 1 and under were people of color as of July 2011, so BYMOC are a growing percentage of the population. "Most Children Younger than Age 1 are Minorities, Census Bureau Reports," US Census Bureau, May 17, 2012, https://www.census.gov/newsroom/releases/archives/population/cb12-90.html.
2. A study of paid family leave law in California found that the program more than doubled the typical length of maternity leave from around three weeks to six or seven weeks. See Rossin-Slater, Ruhm, and Waldfogel (2011).
3. According to the National Assessment of Educational Progress Long-Term Trend Assessment. "National Assessment of Educational Progress Data Explorer," National Center for Education Statistics, accessed May 9, 2016, https://nces.ed.gov/nationsreportcard/naepdata/dataset.aspx.
4. Also from the NAEP Long-Term Trend assessment. Whites have improved too over the same period, but not by quite as much as blacks and Latinos.
5. The National Longitudinal Survey of Youth has continued to track the original 1979 cohort.
6. For an excellent source of deep historical detail, at least in relationship to blacks, see Muhammad (2010).
7. For a recent edited volume covering how many forms of inequity produce unequal opportunities and outcome disparities, see Duncan and Murnane (2011).
8. I do not consider genetic arguments for racial and ethnic differences. I leave that debate to others. For a perspective consistent with ours, see Nisbett (2009).
9. Many link gender differences to the hormonal environment that girls' and boys' brains function in, especially but not exclusively at puberty; the way that the maternal hormonal environment affects the fetus; brain morphology itself; and the way that learning differences manifest by gender (especially ADHD). See Reilly (2012) and Halpern (2012). Halpern proposes the need for a biopsychosocial model to combine the effects of biology, psychology, and sociology. Thanks to Nan Marie Astone for advising me on this topic.
10. "Head Start Early Learning Outcomes Framework 2015," Administration for Children and Families, US Department of Health and Human Services, updated February 1, 2016, http://eclkc.ohs.acf.hhs.gov/hslc/hs/sr/approach/elof.
11. I thank William Monson and Julia Gelatt of the Urban Institute for acquiring and organizing the data from which I constructed these figures. They bear no responsibility for the particular way in which I have used the data to construct these figures.
12. Perry is a famous preschool intervention that served low-income families using teachers with bachelor's degrees and certification in education. Each teacher served five or six children in two-and-a-half-hour daily classes and visited families weekly. There was an emphasis on supporting children's self-initiated learning activities.
13. "Groundbreaking Follow-Up Studies," The Carolina Abecedarian Project, accessed May 4, 2016, http://abc.fpg.unc.edu/groundbreaking-follow-studies
14. "Our Mission," Too Small to Fail, accessed May 4, 2016, http://toosmall.org/mission.
15. "Word Gap Campaigns," Too Small to Fail, accessed May 4, 2016, http://toosmall.org/community/word-gap-campaigns.
16. "Boston Basics," The Boston Basics, accessed May 4, 2016, http://bostonbasics.org/.

17. The founding organizations of the Boston Basics Campaign are the Black Philanthropy Fund, the Achievement Gap Initiative at Harvard University (of which this author is the faculty director), the Boston Mayor's Education Cabinet, the Pediatrics Department at Boston Medical Center, and WGBH Public Broadcasting.

18. See the chapter on test scores and earnings in Jencks and Phillips (1998).

19. Many districts of all sizes now use student surveys for various combinations of evaluation and teacher feedback. Metropolitan districts that have used Tripod or other student surveys recently for some or all of their teachers include New York, Dallas, Houston, Hawaii, Los Angeles, Pittsburgh, Nashville, Tulsa, and others. Several organizations are now in the business of supporting school districts in survey administration, reporting, interpretation, and professional development applications.

20. Tripod surveys are delivered through Tripod Education Partners, Inc., a business partnership between this author and Rob Ramsdell of Cambridge, Massachusetts. The surveys are administered at the classroom level using online or machine-scorable paper questionnaires. Student responses are anonymous and concern their perceptions of teaching, engagement, and socioemotional factors in the classroom. Each teacher receives a personalized online report that helps them learn more about their students' perspectives and identify areas of instruction to improve. This author created the first version 15 years ago in work with Northern Ohio school districts. Now in their 18th generation, the surveys provide feedback to teachers in many districts around the nation.

21. The racial mix for upper elementary across all groups was as follows:

	Larger sample (N= 690,000)	Subsample (N=76,000)
Arab	1.5	7.0
Asian	3.8	1.6
Black	27.2	26.3
East Indian	0.4	1.8
Latino	7.7	8.6
Multiracial (checked multiple options)	14.4	16.8
Native American	1.6	0.9
Pacific Islander	2.4	5.1
West Indian	0.2	0.2
White	26.2	22.9
Other	5.4	3.5
Missing	9.1	5.4

22. The positive differences are very small but statistically significant for *confer* (0.033 standard deviation), *captivate* (0.083 standard deviation), and *clarify* (0.051 standard deviation). Males of color rate teaching the same as white and Asian male classmates for *challenge* and *classroom management*.

23. This includes between classrooms in the same school and also in different schools.

24. The first two items are only available in the subsample of 2,700 classrooms, which is why what follows uses the subsample.

25. See Table 15 of R. Ferguson (2015). Captivate and challenge are the strongest predictors of classroom management, and clarify is the strongest predictor of captivate and challenge.

26. Most of the schools in this larger sample did not take the version of the survey including self-reports of the student's personal behavior used in the analysis above. This is why the analysis above uses only the subsample.

27. This index is the subject of one published study and another that is currently being completed. The published study is Phillips and Rowley (2015).

28. In the top quintiles for both measures, the percentages are (male/female) whites 78/81, blacks 76/81, Latinos 77/83, Asians 64/76, and Native Americans 71/75. In the bottom quintiles, the percentages are whites 44/45, blacks 43/46, Latinos 42/46, Asians 49/58, and Native Americans 36/36.
29. By *low achieving*, I include those with self-reported GPAs of C+ or lower. In other words, low-achieving males of all racial groups tend to feel equally respected or disrespected. In addition, all feel less respected by teachers than same-race males with higher GPAs.
30. Also see findings using the Monitoring the Future Survey reported in Toldson, McGee, and Lemmons (2015).
31. Though not emphasized below, the academic, attentional, and behavioral issues addressed in this paper are all important predictors of which students commit the types of infractions that result in disciplinary encounters. Hence, effective social and academic supports can be considered prevention. Here, however, the question concerns how young people are treated once accused of an infraction.
32. See examples in chapter three of Milner (2015).
33. Unfortunately, much of the evidence on the basis of which bias is alleged is limited by the poor quality of measures.
34. The study uses hierarchical linear multinomial logit regressions with the three disciplinary outcomes of in-school suspension, out-of-school suspension, and expulsion.
35. The principal's perspective on exclusion reaches only the 0.10 level of significance.
36. There was no black-white difference in expulsion before controlling for school-level factors, but one emerged once school-level factors were controlled with an odds ratio of 1.25. The findings also suggest that expulsions for a given infraction are *more* likely at *more*-advantaged schools. Recall that expulsions are rare in general and perhaps even more so at more-advantaged schools; in the overall sample, there is about 1 expulsion for every 20 out-of-school suspensions. For all of these analyses, the lack of detail on the nature of the infraction remains a source of ambiguity. The vast majority of expulsions were for possession or use of weapons, and exactly what the student says or does with a weapon may vary systematically by race, as can the disciplinary history of the student with the weapon.
37. The study does not report on race or gender differences in the offenses for which students are referred to the office. It does, however, report that males are 68.8 percent of the ODR study population while only 51.3 percent of the state population, students qualifying for free or reduced-price meals are 53.4 percent of the ODR study population and 37.5 percent of the state population, and blacks are 23.7 percent of the ODR population while only 12 percent of the state population. See table 2 and text on page 654 in in Skiba et al. (2014).
38. Also, among students who had not been previously suspended, there was no treatment-control difference in perceived respect.
39. If the move was during the teen years, effects were negative. Results are not reported by gender except for marriage rates, where the effects were only for females. See Chetty, Hendren, and Katz (2015).
40. Find several of the evaluation documents on the New York City Small Schools of Choice Evaluation website. "New York City Small Schools of Choice Evaluation," MDRC, accessed May 4, 2016, http://www.mdrc.org/project/new-york-city-small-schools-choice-evaluation#overview.
41. In Houston, all of the principals and 53 percent of the teachers were replaced, some compensated financially to leave. Hiring of new principals and teachers focused on educators who understood that their students came from difficult circumstances and who believed that avoiding failure was the teacher's responsibility. These are the same qualities that Milner advocates.
42. Yeager and Walton caution that the experiments are more nuanced than they may first appear and that quick and superficial applications of the ideas are unlikely to work if implemented incorrectly or under the wrong conditions.

43. Recent evidence indicates that, other things equal, increasing school spending tends to produce at least modest improvement in learning outcomes. See Jackson, Kirabo, and Persico (2015).

44. "Overview," Program for International Student Assessment, accessed May 4, 2016, https://nces.ed.gov/surveys/pisa/.

45. In addition to neither working nor being in school, the CRS definition of disconnectedness requires that the person has not worked during the previous year for reasons other than going to school (Fernandes-Alcantara 2015). For each racial/ethnic group, males without children are more disconnected than females without children. However, when females with children are included, females overall are more disconnected than males for whites and Latinos. This is not true for blacks. According to the CRS report, the disconnection rate for black 16- to 24-year-olds in 2014 was 13.1 percent for males and 8.6 percent for females. Rates for Latinos and whites were 5.3 and 4.6 percent for males and 7.0 and 5.4 percent for females, respectively.

46. Indeed, even with regard to skills, *statistical* discrimination is when employers guess *incorrectly* that an individual person from group A is less skilled than an individual person from group B based on *correct* knowledge of average differences between the groups that may not be true for many individuals.

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